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## Drawn To The Edge

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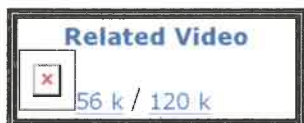
Written by [Stacey Cohan](#)

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Although many are looking forward to the warm weather, it is not without danger. Every summer, children in urban areas fall from open windows in apartment buildings. 9 news Investigative reporter Stacey Cohan looked at the death of one baby boy and the miraculous survival of another.

The child fell from a high rise in northwest Washington. The window had no screen. In a lawsuit, Jordy's parents blame the building management. And others worry that more children will die this summer, as the lure of an open window draws them too close to the edge.



His family calls five-year-old Gerber a miracle. On September 11th, 1999, the then 20-month-old Gerber was playing with his cousin in an apartment on the 9th floor of a northwest Washington building. His aunt Anna was cooking and cracked her window to let out the smoke. When she returned to the kitchen, her daughter called out. "She's like Mommy, Darjo fell, and I say, fall from where? And she say she falls from the window. I was in

shock."

Baby Gerber fell nine stories before landing in a bush. Amazingly, his only injury was a bitten tongue.

Another little boy was not so lucky. On August 26th, 2001, 13-month-old Jordy Martell fell to his death from his sixth floor apartment window. His mother was the first to find him lying on the street. His mother, Maria Martell told me, "He just was bleeding on the nose, on the ear on the mouth. And I tried to give him breath with my mouth but it didn't help."

In both cases, the families lived in buildings owned by Keener management. And in both cases, the families say the company removed the screens from the windows, and never replaced them, even though the DC housing code requires window screens to be in place from March 15th through November 15th.

9 news obtained a memo dated July 16th, 1999, in which Keener management tells Sutton Plaza residents that screens will be removed and replaced that same week - an apparent violation of housing law. Gerber fell two months later. Resident Ana Campos said: "Actually they took all the screens of the windows off because they were changing different type of windows. So they change the window but they don't put the screens in."

Attorney Doug Sparks: "The real issue is how many more children are going to die before management complies with the law."

Attorney Doug Sparks represents the Martell family. He says Keener management's failure to properly screen windows caused Jordy's death. 9 News contacted Claude Keener of Keener management. He said the company has no comment.

Sparks added: "I say how much longer are we going to blame the victims. I say why didn't they warn parents that another child fell."

Maria Martell now clings to her remaining children. She believes a screen would have saved her child's life, and prays other families will be spared her pain. "I don't want this happen to another parent. Every time I walk down the street I look up at a building to see if any window has screens because I know there's a lot of kids that live in apartments."

There are steps you can take yourself to protect your children. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends installing window guards that prevent windows from opening more than a few inches. Studies have shown the guards can significantly reduce falls from windows.