

The Washington Post, August 29, 2001
Copyright 2001 The Washington Post
The Washington Post
August 29, 2001, Wednesday, Final Edition
SECTION: METRO; Pg. B03
LENGTH: 1020 words

HEADLINE: METRO; In Brief

BODY:

Relatives of Jorge Martel, the 14-month-old boy who fell through a sixth-floor window to his death Sunday, said yesterday that an employee of the apartment complex had removed a wire screen about a month ago to clean the window and had not put it back.

At the family's two-bedroom apartment in the 1200 block of 13th Street NW yesterday, Jerry A. Flores, a cousin who lives in the apartment, said the building manager told Martel's family not to put the screen back themselves, promising to return earlier this month to replace it.

Relatives said the child apparently used a sofa to climb onto the window ledge, then fell. He was dead on arrival at Howard University Hospital.

"If [the screen] had been there, the child wouldn't have fallen," Flores said. "If the child had bumped into it, he wouldn't have fallen outside. . . . They had the obligation to put this thing in."

Flores and other relatives said Jorge's father went to a closet to get shoes and left Jorge playing in the living room with the window partly open.

Police and fire officials said the child's mother, who had gone to the store, discovered Jorge lying in an alley below the window. Other residents of the building said their screens also had been removed.

Building officials yesterday referred all questions to Claude Keener, whose company owns the Sutton Plaza apartments, where the family lives. Keener did not return phone calls.

District law requires that all outside windows be screened from

mid-March to mid-November, said Gina Douglas, of the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs.

She said the agency has no complaints on file about the building.