

Watt v Hertfordshire County Council [1954]

Evidence

Watt was a fireman who received an injury when he completed his duty. As a result of the incident, a heavy jack fell onto his leg. The Court proclaimed that the life of the person that was to be saved was more precious than a limb, and the council was not liable for tort or negligence which resulted in the fireman's injuries.

An incident happened 200-300 yards from the fire department where a woman's life was at risk. To save her, firemen needed to lift a lorry which could be done only with the help of special equipment that should have been moved to the scene with the help of special machinery which was not available at the moment of the accident. The chief of a fire department ordered to use other mechanisms to take equipment to the place. However, there was no way to do it in a secure way. The firemen were told to hold the equipment to avoid it from falling. However, because of a red light on the crossroad and the necessity of the truck to stop, the equipment fell and injured the complainant's leg.

Problematics

The complainant made a claim, stating that the fire department was liable for negligence, as inappropriate machinery was used during his duty. This was true.

Resolution

The application was denied, as in case of the emergency, there was no other way the woman could have been saved than with the help of the equipment and vehicles used. These were reasonable actions that corresponded to the level of danger for the life of the harmed woman. The fire department was not liable for a tort or negligence, and no standard of care was offended.

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