

OK to Fire Zookeeper for Letting Gorillas Escape



A zookeeper failed to follow protocol and properly secure an exhibit, resulting in the escape of gorillas. The zookeeper was charged by a silverback gorilla, which pummeled and bit him. The gorillas were eventually corralled without any further injuries to anyone else. The zoo fired the zookeeper and an arbitrator agreed that termination was appropriate. The escape of the gorillas endangered other zoo employees, contractors who were working in the area, visitors and the gorillas themselves. So the zookeeper's failure to secure the door to the exhibit was 'a very serious safety violation.' Although he was a long-time employee who'd taken responsibility for the incident, his record included prior safety violations. Thus, under the circumstances, the arbitrator ruled that his dismissal was reasonable [[Calgary \(City\) v Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 37](#), [2015] CanLII 15352 (AB GAA), March 17, 2015].