

BREAKING U.S. Supreme Court reinstates Trump travel ban, will hear arguments

http://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/lake/lawsuit-filed-over-merrillville-family-s-death/article_4ce9f366-30ed-5529-b817-4063512bc55b.html

URGENT

Lawsuit filed over Merrillville family's 2013 death

Bill Dolan bill.dolan@nwi.com, (219) 662-5328 Mar 19, 2015



A lone van sat in the driveway of the home on West 70th Avenue in Merrillville where a family of four died in 2013, victims of carbon monoxide poisoning from an electric generator.

John J. Watkins, The Times

CROWN POINT | The 2013 suffocation of four Merrillville family members has prompted a wrongful death suit against NIPSCO and the former landlord.

Local attorney Walter Alvarez is alleging negligence killed Kennetha Purnell, 38, Michael Nichols, 41, Matthew Nichols, 13, and Morgan Nichols, 11.

The suit names Madeline Chale and Northern Indiana Public Service Co. as defendants. It alleges the family leased a house in the 800 block of 70th Avenue in Merrillville from Chale.

It alleges NIPSCO failed to provide timely service to the house, forcing the family to use an electrical generator for heat and electricity. It alleges they died from its carbon monoxide exhaust, which infiltrated the living quarters.

Merrillville police said in 2013 the deaths were accidental and appeared to have occurred the evening of Oct. 12, 2013. Police said their initial investigation indicates the family purchased the electrical generator believed to be the source of the carbon monoxide.

Police said the generator was found inside an attached garage and had power cords going to several electronic devices, with all the home's exterior doors and windows closed.

The suit alleges the town of Merrillville hadn't inspected the house for habitation because the Chase family didn't register it as a rental property.

Alvarez stated, "The intent of Merrillville's law to register one's premises, as a rental, is very commendable, however, the landlord, Madeline Chale's failure to do so, turned out to have fatal consequences.

"This could have been avoided," Alvarez said.

Nick Meyer, director of external communications for NIPSCO public affairs, issued a prepared statement Thursday that NIPSCO hasn't yet been notified of any litigation.

"This was indeed a tragic incident for this family and the community. Records indicate that (the family) were not a NIPSCO customer at the time of the incident.

The Chale family couldn't be reached for comment.



Mom wants to make CO detectors mandatory

William Dolan

Bill has reported in Lake County since 1972 after graduating from Indiana University. He has worked for The Times since 1997, covering the courts and local government during much of his tenure. Born and raised in New Albany, Ind., he is a native Hoosier.