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Rogers Park fire family files suit

Six children killed in blaze



By Karen Jordan

September 21, 2006 - The Ramirez family lost five children in a fire that destroyed their Rogers Park apartment earlier this month. Now they are suing the building's owner and management company.

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A sixth child died in that fire -- the family of Escarlet Ramos is also part of the lawsuit. Power to the apartment had been off for months and there are questions about the smoke detectors.

Attorneys for the Ramirez and Ramos family say they were working to resolve the dispute with the electric company, and now the attorneys say there are many questions that need to be answered. Who is responsible for the death of these six children?

"We will find some answers, maybe not all. But no one who played a part in this tragedy will not go without scrutiny. That much is owed to Kevin, Idaly, Suzette, Eric, Vanessa and Escarlet," said Steven Levin, victims' attorney.

Levin represents the Ramirez and Ramos families, whose loved ones died in the apartment fire three weeks ago at 7706 N. Marshfield. A lawsuit was filed Thursday in Cook County Court against both the owners and management of the building, alleging that they did not maintain working smoke detectors in the apartment where the Ramirez family lived.

"There were no smoke detectors in the apartment at the time of the fire," said Levin.

Levin says a city ordinance states it is the responsibility of the landlord to maintain smoke detectors in the building and that right after the fatal fire, the fire department found no evidence of smoke detectors in the apartment. At that time, the landlord, Jay Johnson, who's named as a defendant in the lawsuit, said an inspection a year ago confirmed the presence of both smoke and carbon monoxide detectors in the building.

"We know for sure that Jay Johnson knew they had no electricity," said Levin. What about no smoke detectors? " "You will have to ask him about that."

The attorney will also investigate ComEd to see if the company played a role in the tragedy. The electricity was in the Ramirez apartment cut off in May and the family used candles for light. A candle is what sparked the fire that killed five Ramirez children and Escarlet Ramos, the younger sister of Luis Alberto Ramos.

"I've tried to get over what happened. It's hard. We support each other to get past what happened," said Luis Alberto Ramos.

Attorneys for the family say they have a team of fire inspectors who will return to the property on Monday to see if they can gather any evidence to help them in their case.



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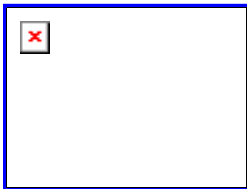
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