

Allison deaths prompt lawsuit

The Intelligencer

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MARCH 7, 2002

Families of four people killed and six others injured are seeking damages in the explosion and fire at Village Green Apartments last June.

A civil lawsuit was filed in Philadelphia County Court on Wednesday on behalf of four people who died and six others who were injured in a fire and explosion caused by rising waters at Village Green Apartments in Upper Moreland in June.

Family members of Louise Williams, 83, her grandson Roger, 29; and Angelina Malizia, 97, and her son Rudolph, 77, filed the suit. Those injured, Nicholas Baldini, John Denny, Thomas Mulvihill, Michelle Seeger, and Gordon and Anne Weir also joined the suit. Named as defendants are the management firm Scully Co., Village Green Associates L.P., Village Green Apartments Inc., Peco Energy Co., Norfolk Southern Corp., CSX Corp. and the laundry equipment company Caleco.

Floodwaters from the remnants of Tropical Storm Allison entered the basement of Village Green, pulling a clothes dryer away from the gas line, causing gas to leak into the upper floors on June 16. The gas ignited, causing an explosion and a fire.

Ruth Widmer, 83, and John Manlove, 80, also died in the fire.

[Tom Kline](#), the attorney representing the victims, said Scully and Village Green were negligent because they knew the apartments located at 503 S. Warminster Road were in a flood-prone area. The complaint is 107 pages.

Kline said Scully and Village Green were aware that the complex's parking lot and service areas of the buildings flooded in the past but did not take precautions to ensure the safety of residents. He adds that they did not have an evacuation plan or plans to eliminate the impact of flooding at the complex.

"I see these as preventable, tragic deaths," Kline said, "that should have been avoided."

Representatives from Scully could not be reached for comment Wednesday.

Caleco is named in the suit because the laundry equipment that pulled away from the wall was not bolted to the floor or the wall. The lawsuit also states that Scully and Village Green should

have known that a gas leak or the odor of gas was reported in the area. However, these parties and Peco did not take steps to shut off the gas.

Kline said CSX is named in the suit because its culvert blocks the Pennypack Creek's flow of water and, therefore, contributed to the problem.

According to the lawsuit, Louise Williams and her grandson Roger and Angelina Malizia and her son Rudolph died "after experiencing enormous pain and suffering." They were severely burned by the fire because they were trapped by the floodwaters. The others suffered from a variety of injuries including damage to bones, muscles, nerves, body deformation, anxiety, and emotional and psychological problems.