

Suit filed in deadly gas explosion

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Victims of a gas explosion at a Montgomery County apartment complex last year have sued Peco Energy Co. and the owners and managers of the complex, alleging negligence.

Village Green Apartments in Upper Moreland exploded in flames in June after 20-foot-high floodwaters from Tropical Storm Allison dislodged a gas dryer in the basement of one building, causing a gas leak. The fire claimed the lives of six people.

"This was a terrible tragedy which should have been prevented," said [Thomas Kline](#), an attorney representing the families of four residents who died and six others who were injured. The apartment complex managers "knew they had a problem. It wasn't tended to, and the result was the loss of property and life. It could all have been avoided. It should all have been avoided."

Kline said that flooding had occurred in the area before, close to the mouth of Mill Creek. Still, no plan was put in place, he argued, to evacuate residents in the event of another flood. He also said that Peco and the owners and managers of the apartments did not respond quickly enough to reports of a gas leak two hours before the fire erupted.

The suit was filed yesterday in Common Pleas Court in Philadelphia.

The owners of the apartment complex, Village Green Associates, and its managers, Philadelphia-based Scully Co., could not be reached for comment late yesterday.

A spokesman for Peco, Michael Wood, said that Peco received a phone call from police only after the explosion and that the suit had no basis.

"We feel pretty comfortable we're going to be able to defend the company's timeliness of response," he said, adding that other suits had been already been filed by residents of Village Green or their families.