

Deputy Sues After Staircase Collapses

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Crushed by a three-story staircase while conducting a criminal investigation in June, Harris County Deputy Sheriff Larry Pohlmeier blamed his injuries on the apartment owner and a wrecker service and filed suit.

The officer was pursuing the driver of a stolen SUV who slammed into the Haverstock Hills Apartments. The suspect fled and police called in a Humble Wrecker Service to remove the vehicle. Investigating the scene while the wreckers worked, the staircase collapsed, pinning Pohlmeier under the metal structure.

Although the incident occurred in Harris County, Houston attorney Jason Gibson filed a personal injury lawsuit on the behalf of Larry and Gaye Lynn Pohlmeier against J. Allen Management Co. and Humble Wrecker with the Jefferson County District Court on July 25.

The Haverstock Hills apartment owners, Allen Management, has an office in Jefferson County.

According to the plaintiffs' original petition, on June 22, 2007, Deputy Pohlmeier was crushed by a three-story apartment staircase, which collapsed on him while he was conducting a criminal investigation. He suffered a broken pelvis, fractured left foot, broken back, two broken ankles and a severe arm laceration.

"At approximately 7 a.m., Harris County Sheriff Deputies attempted to pull over the driver of a stolen SUV, the suit said.

After the suspect rammed the vehicle into the apartments, he/she fled on foot and left the SUV imbedded in the staircase, the suit said. "Humble Wrecker Service was dispatched to pull the wrecked SUV from the staircase."

"As Pohlmeier investigated the scene, the staircase collapsed, pinning him under the metal structure," the suit said. "Several sheriff deputies and bystanders aided in rescuing him from the collapsed staircase. Pohlmeier was transported by ambulance to Memorial Hermann Hospital."

The deputy underwent several surgeries to repair his broken pelvis and back, needing 12 screws, 10 pins and two plates to mend his broken body, the suit said.

The suit faults Allen Management "for failing to adequately warn" him that a staircase may collapse if a wrecker yanks a SUV from underneath its steps.

The suit also faults Humble Wrecker with negligence for allegedly failing to inspect the work area.

Pohlmeyer is suing for past and future physical pain, disfigurement, impairment, mental anguish, medical expenses, loss of opportunity, enjoyment of life and earning capacity, plus all court costs and exemplary damages.

His wife is also suing for loss of consortium.

"Defendants' conduct illustrates not only an attitude of conscious indifference for the rights, safety and welfare of others, but also shows Defendants' actual and subjective awareness of the dangers of such conduct," the suit said.

The plaintiffs are demanding a trial by jury.

Judge Gary Sanderson, 60th Judicial District, will preside over the case.

Case No. B179-712