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PRODUCTS LIABILITY

Smoke detector maker not liable for deadly fire, jury says

On Aug. 11, a jury determined that a smoke detector maker wasn't to blame for a fire that killed five people and injured two others. On Jan. 9, 2006, fire broke out in a mobile home owned by Clara Patton and Kimberly Graham. The fire killed Patton's mother, Laura Patton; Graham's two children, Destiny Graham and Da'Marcus King; and two other children, Nathaniel Brown and Tesharme Davidson. Clara Patton and another child, John Brown, escaped the blaze but sustained injuries. The victims' families sued smoke detector manufacturer Walter Kidde Portable Equipment, alleging its alarms didn't activate in a timely manner. They also claimed the alarms were fully dependant on the home's power and would fail during an outage, which occurred in this case. The defense argued the detectors met all federal safety standards.

Patton, et al. v. Walter Kidde Portable Equipment, No. 2:08-cv-00040-TJW-CE

Court: U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Texas, Marshall

Plaintiffs' Attorneys: Joe D. Clayton, Tyler; Glenn A. Perry, Sloan, Bagley, Hatcher & Perry Law Firm, Longview; Bradley T. Steele, Law Office of Bradley T. Steele, Longview; Richard H. Taylor, Taylor Martino Zazaaur, Mobile, Ala.

Defense Attorneys: Ruth Ann Daniels and Wade L. McClure, Gibson, McClure, Wallace & Daniels, Dallas; Thomas H. Davis and Bradley J. Yeretsky, Stinson Morrison Heckler, Kansas City, Mo.

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