



Settlement reached in asbestos case

By John Mangalanzo/The Reporter News Editor

A civil lawsuit filed in the 32nd Judicial Court on behalf of a Wisconsin man who died of asbestos-related cancer was settled out of court over the weekend.

Kenny Maxwell, a lawyer for the plaintiff, said that both sides have reached an agreement to settle and end litigation Sunday night. The court was notified Monday of the settlement.

According to the attorneys, the settlement is in excess of \$1.5 million.

Maxwell said there has been money on the table when the trial began, and that both sides had been negotiating non-stop.

He said that it placed pressure on both sides when a jury was seated to hear the case.

On Nov. 15, 2002, the family of Walter Flatoff filed a \$6 million civil suit against Georgia Pacific and Bondex alleging that the joint compounds used were manufactured by the defendants caused his untimely death, and that the corporations were negligent in warning the public on the hazards of their supposedly asbestos containing joint compound products.

During opening statements last week, attorneys for the plaintiffs told a jury of eight women and four men that they would prove that products manufactured by the defendants caused Flatoff's illness, and eventually his death.

Expert testimonies were also heard from both sides regarding the matter, and the case was expected to last for at least two weeks.

Troyce Wolf, who is a lawyer for the plaintiff, described Flatoff's death as a "horrible way to die" and that asbestos of all types can cause mesothelioma.

Flatoff died in 2003 after a lengthy fight with mesothelioma, a benign (non-cancerous) or malignant (cancerous) tumor affecting the lining of the chest or abdomen. Exposure to asbestos particles in the air increases the risk of developing malignant meso-thelioma.

According to the National Cancer Institute (NCI), most people who develop mesothelioma have worked on jobs where they inhaled asbestos particles.

The next step, according to Maxwell, is either to file a settlement agreement or a joint dismissal agreement to end litigation. The judge will then issue an order of dismissal.

Lawyers from both sides are in the process of preparing the proper paperwork for the final approval.

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