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# CPS Energy On Hook For \$60M After \$109M Explosion Verdict

By **Y. Peter Kang**

Law360 (February 12, 2025, 10:31 PM EST) -- A San Antonio jury has awarded \$109.5 million to a family whose house exploded due to CPS Energy's alleged negligent maintenance of the home's natural gas system, but the nine-figure verdict was reined in by a "high-low agreement" capping the utility's liability at \$60 million, plaintiffs' counsel said.

Following a three-week trial, the Bexar County jury on Monday ruled in favor of Robert Rymers and his mother, Virginia Rymers, in a suit accusing CPS Energy of failing to properly maintain the gas system of a rental home which led to the May 2021 explosion that caused Robert Rymers' severe burns resulting in permanent disability, and Virginia Rymers' burns and other injuries, according to the family's attorneys with Lyons & Simmons LLP.

The suit alleges that CPS Energy never replaced any equipment for the house's gas delivery system since it was installed in 1960 except for twice replacing the gas meter, which resulted in multiple failures that the utility should have been aware of and fixed. The malfunctioning equipment caused gas to leak into the house and led to the explosion, according to the complaint.

The verdict consisted of \$103.5 million for Robert Rymers' past and future pain and suffering, disfigurement and mental anguish, among other categories. His mother was awarded about \$6 million for pain and suffering and mental anguish, according to the verdict.

During jury deliberations, the parties agreed to a high-low settlement agreement, which limits a defendant's maximum liability while at the same time guaranteeing a minimum payment for the plaintiff even if they lose the trial.

The family was guaranteed to receive \$8 million even if they lost, pursuant to the deal, but instead they are set to receive the high-end of \$60 million, plaintiffs' counsel said.

Michael Lyons, an attorney for the family, said the utility denied fault despite ample evidence the blast was gas-related.

"CPS Energy refused to take responsibility despite the fact that both the San Antonio Police Department's arson team and the San Antonio Fire Department determined the explosion was caused by natural gas," Lyons said in a statement.

Another attorney for the Rymerses, Chris Simmons, added in a statement that "the verdict cannot undo this tragedy, but it serves as an example that our jury system remains the best way for citizens to receive justice."

A spokeswoman for CPS Energy told Law360 on Wednesday that the company was "disappointed in the outcome."

"We respect our legal system and the jury's decision but genuinely do not believe our gas was the cause of this accident," the spokeswoman said in a statement. "We remain dedicated to safety and excellence in the operation of our community's gas system."

The suit was filed in September 2021 and states that the mother and son did not know that the house's gas meter had multiple failures over the years, and the only maintenance CPS Energy did

was to replace the gas meter in 2008 and 2015.

"Approximately 6 years later, history would repeat itself only this time, it resulted in life-altering and permanent injuries," the complaint states.

In addition, even though the landlord had stopped using gas after converting the household appliances to electric in 2020, CPS Energy did not ensure that the gas equipment was properly shut off, the suit said.

"Due to CPS Energy's failure to maintain its gas distribution system, failure to maintain its related equipment, failure to properly inspect and monitor for leaks, failure to develop and enact appropriate policies and procedures for preventative maintenance and leak detection, and failure to train its workers with regard to inspecting and maintaining its gas distribution system, natural gas leaked into the House after an equipment failure and this explosion occurred," the suit said.

The family is represented by Michael Lyons, Chris Simmons, Chris Carr and Michael Wozniak of Lyons & Simmons LLP and Omar G. Alvarez of the Law Office of O.G. Alvarez & Associates PC.

CPS Energy is represented by Stephen Calhoun and Jeffrey T. Harvey of Jackson Walker LLP and Evan F. Patterson of Naman Howell Smith & Lee PLLC.

The case is Virginia Rymers et al. v. CPS Energy et al., case number 2021-CI-18484, in the 166th Judicial District Court of Bexar County, Texas.

--Editing by Kelly Duncan.