

Bizarre' Electrocution Prompts Home Builder Lawsuit

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One of the nation's largest home builders, its electrical subcontractors and a Central Florida county have been named in a wrongful death lawsuit after an appliance deliveryman was electrocuted in a "bizarre accident," according to a Problem Solvers investigation. Deliveryman Rafael Ugalde died while on the job at 2777 Shearwater St. in Lennar's Lost Lake Reserve in Clermont, Fla. Ugalde was electrocuted even though power to the room had been turned off, the report said.

"Wires behind a hallway wall hold the key to the bizarre accident that killed Ugalde," Problem Solver Mike Holfeld said. Attorney O.B. Samuel, who has documented the investigation into Ugalde's death, said a drywall screw had been fired through the yellow wire casing, piercing the hot wire inside and the metal stud. That created a giant power circuit that electrified the house, according to the report.



"When they tore down the wall, it was quite obvious what had happened," Samuel said.

An electrical subcontractor for the Lennar project found 110 volts flowing through the screws of the room's mirror, the report said.

"That discovery is important because Rafael Ugalde was electrocuted as he hooked the dryer hose to a vent," Holfeld said.

The medical examiner noted that the metal duct and vent tested positive for 110 volts, according to the report.

Under state code, the electric wires should have been bundled with a plastic strap or metal clip. However, there was no evidence the wires were ever bundled.

Local 6 News also learned that Ugalde's shoes were wet while he was in the structure yet he never touched an outlet.

"Five months later and no one has accepted responsibility for the fatal mistake," Holfeld said.



"Well, then this story changes because we're not talking about an accident, we're talking murder," Lisa Ugalde said.

The lawsuit's trail of blame includes the Lake County building inspector.

Documents obtained by Local 6 showed an inspector approved the electrical wiring on Sept. 6, 14 days before Ugalde was electrocuted.

"No denials were issued for the wiring," Holfeld said. "Ironically, the final approval was issued two weeks after Ugalde died."

The lawsuit is expected to be filed this week.

An attorney for Lennar Homes told Local 6 News that new safety protocols have been put in place since the accident. The company said it is confident that the rest of the homes in the subdivision are safe.

"Lake County and the electrical subcontractors are not talking," Holfeld said. "So, the question remains, who made the mistake? And, who will a jury hold accountable?"

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