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SUIT FILED IN MAN'S DEATH AT REYNOLDSBURG FIREWORKS

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Dispatch Courts Reporter

The wife and surviving children of a man killed in a fireworks display accident in Reynoldsburg last summer have filed a wrongful death lawsuit against two fireworks companies, the city and several other defendants.

Deborah Ryll of Fletcher Drive said in her suit, filed in Franklin County Common Pleas Court, that the defendants were negligent in their handling of a public fireworks display in Huber Park on July 4. During the performance, a shell exploded in a launch tube, spraying a spectator area with shrapnel.

Daniel Ryll, 37, sitting more than 700 feet away, was struck in the arm and chest and was killed.

Other defendants in the lawsuit include the American importer of the fireworks, Schneitter Fireworks of St. Joseph, Mo.; the distributor of the shells, Columbus Fireworks Display of Marengo, Ohio; and unknown public officials responsible for inspecting the site.

The suit seeks unspecified damages.

Attorneys **Keith Karr** and Robert P. Sherman, who filed the lawsuit Tuesday, said Mrs. Ryll was pregnant at the time of the mishap and is living with relatives.

"She was 8 1/2 months pregnant when the negligence of the defendants caused the death of her husband, and she's had to deal with raising her children alone," Karr said. "It's such a tragedy that didn't have to happen."

No criminal charges were filed after an investigation last summer by local and state officials who concluded the Chinese-made shell was defective. The blast left a 4-foot-wide crater at Huber Park on Davidson Drive. Two crew members and a small child also were injured in the blast, one critically, Reynoldsburg police said.

The license of fireworks exhibitor Donald Way of Ashland, Ohio, was revoked after he was charged by the state fire marshal's office with failure to make sure the mortar tubes were

buried at a state-specified depth and with allowing a person younger than 18 to set off fireworks. Way was employed by Columbus Fireworks Display.

The company has had a contract for seven years with Reynoldsburg to provide the fireworks display. There was no answer at the company's telephone number yesterday.

Under the contract with Reynoldsburg, the company carried a \$1 million insurance policy.

William Underwood, Reynoldsburg city attorney, declined comment yesterday when asked about the lawsuit.

A police investigation showed that Columbus Fireworks Display may have violated several safety regulations of the National Fire Protection Association Code, most notably that the mortar tube - which was five to 10 years old - was not buried deep enough and was not barricaded with sand bags.

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