

River Vale worker injured in Ct. power plant explosion files \$6M lawsuit

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A 52-year-old River Vale worker injured in an explosion at a Connecticut power plant filed a \$6 million lawsuit in federal court today alleging proper precautions were not taken at the site.

The man, Nicholas Novik, has been out of work since the accident, which killed six workers and injured 50 others. Lawyers for Novik argue that the owner and three contractors at the site failed to properly ensure that gas at plant, which was still under construction, would not ignite, according to the lawsuit.

“There have been a number of state cases filed, but this is the first federal case,” said William Bloss, an attorney for Novik. “We’re investigating others.”

The six-page complaint was filed in U.S. District Court in Connecticut today, court records show.

Bloss said that because of the nature of Novik’s injuries, he would not be immediately available to comment. The attorney described the injuries as non-life-threatening but **“life-altering,”** the most serious of which was trauma to his head, causing a concussion and hearing loss.

The companies named in the suit include the plant’s owner, the Middletown- based Kleen Energy Systems, as well as some of the largest contractors working at the power plant. Those contractors include O&G Industries, Inc. of Torrington, Conn.; Keystone Construction and Maintenance Services, Inc., of Rowley, Mass.; and Bluewater Energy Solutions, Inc., of Acworth, Ga.

Dan Carey, a spokesman for O&G, the general contractor of the project, said in a brief telephone interview that the company would have no comment. Spokespersons for the other defendants also declined comment.

“Since we haven’t had a chance to review it, there’s not much we can say at this point,” said Nancy Sterling, a spokeswoman for Keystone.

The Feb. 7 explosion has been the genesis for numerous civil lawsuits filed on behalf of workers and other victims there, the first of which were filed weeks after the incident.

The site’s owners had originally planned to get the \$1 billion plant up and running by early this summer. But those plans were put on hold after the explosion. The owners now said that they will shoot for June 2011 as repairs are completed.

The lawsuit comes on the heels of \$16.6 million in fines issued two weeks ago by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration to several contractors who worked at the plant. OSHA accused those contractors of hundreds of safety violations.

“We were interested in seeing what OSHA’s conclusions were before filing,” Bloss said. **“They obviously were very thorough with their investigation.”**

U.S. Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis remarked at the time of the OSHA **announcement that the penalties were to “reflect the gravity and severity of the deadly conditions created by the companies managing the work at the site.”**

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