

Clyde Cancer Cluster families sue Whirlpool Corp.

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After seven years of searching for answers, families in the Clyde Cancer Cluster believe they've found the possible cause of the unusually high rate of cancer in the small community.

As a result of the new test results from attic dust samples, this week 27 plaintiffs filed a class action lawsuit in federal court against the largest employer in Clyde: Whirlpool Corporation.

They're seeking at least five million dollars in damages.

"We're turning up the heat!" says Steve Keller at Wednesday's news conference.

Keller's grandson Kole died from cancer six years ago. Keller is in the group of people suing Whirlpool Corporation for wrongful death and property damage.

"The problem is that corporate America does not see the Alexa's of this world," says Warren Brown who lost his daughter Alexa to cancer in 2009.

The Clyde dad says he's keeping a promise he made to Alexa on her death bed.

"The only manner by which the Whirlpools of this world can be held accountable and forced to fix the unhealthy situations that they have had a hand in producing is by hitting them in their pocketbooks," says Brown.

The lawsuit alleges benzaldehyde, a hazardous substance and suspected carcinogen used in the Whirlpool manufacturing process, polluted the air possibly through emissions from the plant's smokestacks.

"We were stunned to find these in these attics," says Alan Mortensen, an attorney for the families.

Their evidence comes from an environmental expert hired by the families. Back in March the expert tested dust in the

attics of the homes where kids died to get a sample of the air they breathed. He found levels of benzaldehyde far above US EPA standards in each one.

"We tested homes that were fairly new, 10 years old, and we tested a home that was 110 years old and they all have benzaldehyde at the same level," says Mortensen.

"It has pretty much wiped out financially everything that I've ever had," says Larry Ross, Junior, who is in remission after doctors diagnosed him with kidney cancer and leukemia.

The 52-year-old is a plaintiff because he lives near the old Whirlpool Park which is five miles outside of Clyde in Green Springs.

That's where the U.S. EPA last year found evidence of toxic sludge, PCB's, buried nine feet deep.

"One of the things I'd like to see to come out of this is whoever is the cause is to get things cleaned up. I don't want anybody to go through what I've been through," says Ross.

Kristine Vernier, a spokesperson for Whirlpool Corporation released a statement saying, "We are aware of the filing and we are evaluating these new allegations. We will vigorously defend Whirlpool, its employees, and the community against these allegations. Whirlpool has been part of the fabric of the Clyde community for more than 60 years and we remain committed to acting responsibly."