

Lawsuit filed in woman's death by fire truck

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(Photo: Submitted)

TIFFIN - A Tiffin man whose wife died after being struck by a fire truck at an Adams Township reservoir filed a wrongful death lawsuit Wednesday against the Green Springs Rural Volunteer Fire Department and Seth Knieriemen, the firefighter who was driving the truck.

Lorri Riehm, 53, died June 28 after being struck by the truck driven by volunteer firefighter Seth Knieriemen, of Green Springs, according to Seneca County Sheriff Bill Eckelberry. Knieriemen was backing up slowly and Riehm was on a walking trail atop the reservoir's embankment, wearing headphones and with her back to the truck, when she was struck, Eckelberry said in June.

The lawsuit, filed in Seneca County Common Pleas Court by Paul Riehm against the Green Springs fire department and Knieriemen, seeks wrongful death damages of more than \$25,000 and survival action damages of more than \$25,000.

"This completely senseless accident not only took the life of a woman dedicated to her community through children's ministries, it also shattered her family," said Chuck Boyk, a Toledo attorney representing the Riehm family. "Despite seeking out what was supposed to be a safe place to walk, her life was taken in a completely preventable incident that to this day the Green Springs fire department has yet to apologize for or even extend their condolences about."

Greg Lowe, chief of the GSRVFD, declined to comment Wednesday.

Firefighters had been called to the Beaver Creek Reservoir, which is in Seneca County and owned by the City of Clyde, on a water rescue call after a report that a small boat had capsized and two men were in the water.

After the boaters were rescued, Knieriemen got into the pickup truck and drove backwards on the embankment path, which normally is closed to vehicular traffic, according to the lawsuit.

Christin Stickles, a GSRVFD member, saw that the pickup was about to back into Riehm and "screamed for Mr. Knieriemen to stop, but by the time he finally stopped, he had already completely run Lorri over," according to the suit.

The lawsuit cites several contributing factors including the operator's rear view from the truck's cab was obstructed by a hose reel, there were no ground guides or spotters as Knieriemen was backing up, and the fire department did not set up pedestrian barriers on the walking trail.

"Paul Riehm just wants to see their safety policies changed so that it never happens again," Boyk said.

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