



# 'I Want Justice': Family Of Teen Killed In Merrimack Valley Gas Explosions Talks Exclusively To I-Team

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LAWRENCE (CBS) – “I’m angry and it’s not fair,” said Lucianny Rondon, sister of Leonel Rondon, the only person killed in the Merrimack Valley Gas Explosions.

On the afternoon of September 13, 2018, the 18-year-old had just passed his driving test and wanted to share the good news with friends in Lawrence.

He was sitting in the driver’s seat of an SUV parked in their driveway when the Columbia Gas explosions began. His friend’s house on Chickering Road exploded and the chimney came crashing down on the car. Leonel was crushed and two of his friends in the car were injured.




Leonel Rondon (Facebook photo)

In the family’s only interview, Lucianny told the I-Team, “It’s difficult











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for us. I always think out of so many explosions, only my brother died. This shouldn't happen to anyone. This is horrible, knowing that he's not gonna call you, not gonna visit you."



Leonel's heartbroken mom, Rosaly, speaking in Spanish through her daughter who helped interpret her feelings told WBZ, through her tears, the pain is still very raw. She said Leonel was a kind humble young man and in English said, "I miss him...love too much."

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- Leonel's dad, Miguel, explained that he still waits for him at night and can't believe he is gone. Telling the I-Team he died that day too.

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A home on Chickering Road in Lawrence exploded Sept. 13, 2018. The chimney crushed an SUV, killing Leonel Rondon. (WBZ-TV)

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And while Leonel's family continues to grieve, federal investigators at the National Transportation Safety Board determined the cause of the disaster stemmed from errors in a Columbia Gas engineer's plans for pipe replacement work. The NTSB report said that led to the over-pressurization of natural gas lines and ultimately caused the fires and explosions. The agency also pointed out several other safety concerns and lack of state oversight.

Federal Investigators are also looking into the possibility of filing criminal charges against Columbia Gas. In November, during a congressional field hearing, legislators raised questions about the company's practices calling them tragically deficient.



Leonel Rondon's grave is marked by candles and flowers (Image: WBZ-TV)

Doug Sheff represents the Rondon family and tells the I-Team, "We need to punish these companies so this never happens again, and the only way we can do it is to make sure it affects these billionaire company's bottom line and that's exactly what we're gonna do because this is outrageous."

Leonel's family plans to file a lawsuit against Columbia Gas and wants his short life to have a long lasting meaning. Lucianny said, "I don't want any other family to go through this, I want justice, it's not fair for us or any other family to feel this pain."

Columbia Gas, in a previously issued statement that they sent to the I-Team said, "Our hearts go out to the Rondon family. We are dedicated to doing everything possible to ensure that something like this never happens again."

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