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# Family of man killed in gas explosions reaches settlement with Columbia Gas

By: Manoella Macedo

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**BOSTON** - The family of a man killed during the Merrimack Valley explosions has reached a settlement with the gas company responsible for the catastrophe.

Leonel Rondon, 18, was killed when a chimney fell on top of the parked car he was in. The explosions and fires that rocked the Merrimack Valley on Sept. 13 caused the chimney as well as the structure of the house to collapse.

On Tuesday, July 10, the Rondon family announced they reached a settlement with Columbia Gas, saying it is the "result of voluntary mediation between the parties." The actual amount of the settlement is confidential.



**Scott Tetreault**  
@BostonNewsMan

**#Breaking:** The family of Leonel Rondon, the young man who lost his life as a result of the September 13, 2018 gas

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"Leonel tragically lost his life when a chimney from a nearby house fell onto a car," said Doug Sheff, attorney for the Rondon family. "He was only 18 years old and full of life. He loved science and had a passion for music. He dreamt of going to college and cared for his family members in every way possible. His mother, Rosaly, described Leonel as 'the happiness of the house.' The family can only hope that this kind of catastrophe will never happen again. Nothing can replace the loss of Leonel and the Rondons will continue to cherish his memory, his loving support and positive impact on his family and community. Sheff Law will establish a scholarship fund designed to encourage an ongoing interest in public safety and community service."

Aside from the settlement, Columbia Gas has also set up a scholarship fund in Leonel's name and will work with the Rondon family in the future on its establishment.

"We remain heartbroken over the tragic loss of Leonel Rondon and again express our deepest sympathy to his family and to the entire community," said Joe Hamrock, CEO and President of NiSource Inc., the parent company of Columbia Gas. "We recognize the pain that remains and understand that nothing we can ever say or do will bring Leonel back to his loved ones or erase that pain. Since this tragic event, we have always wanted to do the right thing for the Rondon family and all of those affected, and we are pleased to have reached this settlement. We are grateful for the opportunity to work with the Rondon family to honor Leonel through a scholarship fund, and we will continue to honor his memory."

Thousands of people were displaced and homes were destroyed as explosions rocked the area and triggered fires in the areas of Lawrence, Andover and North Andover.

The family and Columbia Gas added, "We would also like to thank Brian Mone, the mediator, for his steadfast work on this matter."

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