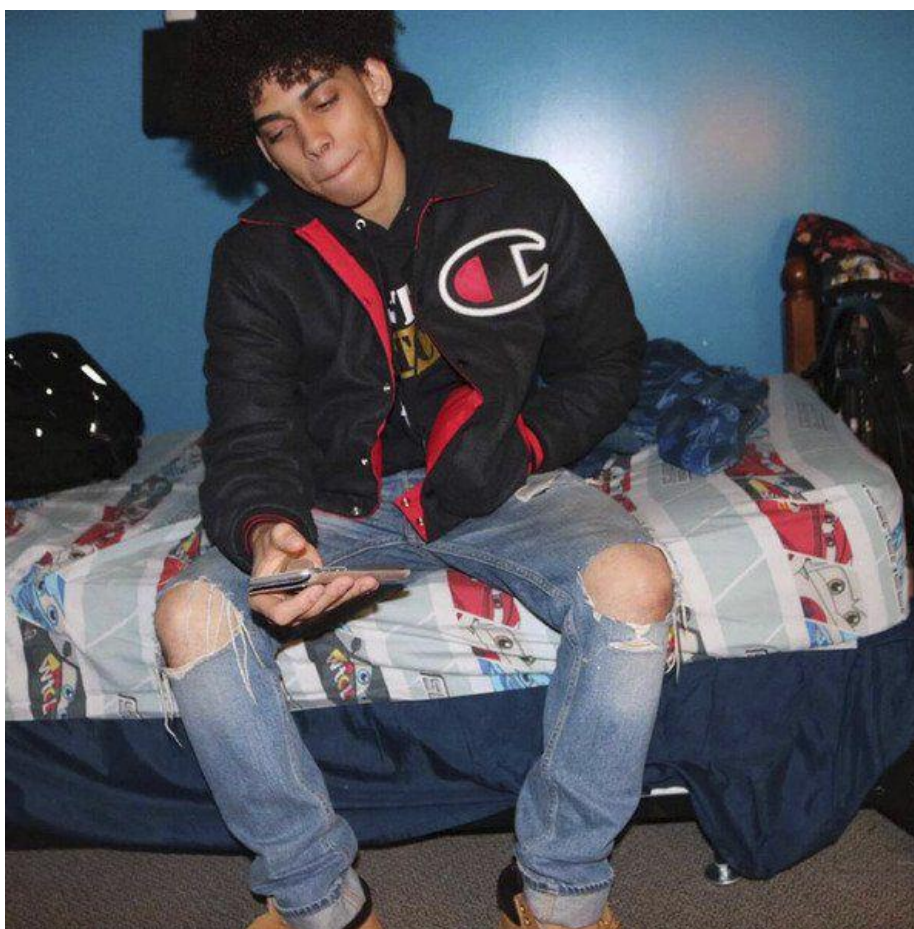


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BREAKING FEATURED

Gas company settles with family of Leonel Rondon, killed in Sept. 13 gas explosions

By Jill Harmacinski | jharmacinski@eagletribune.com 4 hrs ago



Leonel Rondon
File photo



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LAWRENCE — The family of Leonel Rondon, the 18-year-old man killed in the Sept. 13 Merrimack Valley gas explosions, has settled its legal claims with Columbia Gas of Massachusetts, the company announced in a press release Tuesday morning

The settlement is the result of voluntary mediation between the parties. The amount of the settlement is confidential, per the terms of the agreement, according to the statement released to the media at 9 a.m.

Rondon attended the Phoenix Academy Charter School in Lawrence at the time of his death. He had just gotten his driver's license hours before the accident that killed him.



A gas explosion destroyed this house on 39 Chickering Rd. in Lawrence killing Leonel Rondon, 18 when the chimney, seen here, fell on the car he was in.

Carl Russo

“Leonel tragically lost his life when a chimney from a nearby house fell onto a car. 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,” said Doug Sheff, Rondon family attorney.

“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.”

Columbia Gas will also set up a scholarship fund in Rondon’s name, independent of the settlement announced today. The company will work with the family on its establishment in the near future.

This is a developing story. More coming in online and print editions of The Eagle-Tribune.

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