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NORTH BAY FIRES

First 2 wrongful death lawsuits filed in North Bay fires

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The ABC7 I-Team has learned the first 2 wrongful death lawsuits against PG&E were filed Wednesday in connection with the Wine Country Fires. (KGO-TV)

by Mark LaMet

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Attorney Mary Alexander filed the suits on behalf of the families of a couple who died in the Redwood Valley fire.

Steve Bruce Stelter, 56, was found near a vehicle outside the home he shared with his girlfriend, 71-year-old Janet Kay Costanzo, on the 11300 block of West Road in Redwood Valley around 2:45 p.m. on Oct. 9, 2017. Her remains were found inside the burned out residence.

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The Redwood and Coyote Valley fires took eight lives and destroyed 300 homes, according to the Mendocino County Sheriff's Office.

The lawsuit accuses PG&E of negligence and failing to properly trim, remove, or maintain vegetation near their electrical equipment.

The lawsuits allege power lines and/or other electrical equipment came in contact with vegetation, causing the Wine Country Fires.

I-TEAM: PG&E workers believe hurricane-level winds caused deadly North Bay wildfires, power line damage

In response to the lawsuits, Ari Vanrenen of PG&E Corporate Communications issued a statement saying: "Nothing is more important to us than the safety and well-being of our customers and communities we serve. Our thoughts are with everyone impacted by these devastating wildfires. We are aware that lawsuits have been filed. There has been no determination on the causes of the fires. We're focused on doing everything we can to help these communities rebuild and recover."

[Click here to read the entire lawsuit filed on behalf of the family of Steve Bruce Stelter.](#)

[Click here for a look at more stories and videos about the North Bay fires.](#)