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August 29, 2014



## Lawsuit targets landowner at heart of Colockum Tarps Fire

By Jefferson Robbins, The Wenatchee World, Wash.  
McClatchy-Tribune Information Services

Aug. 29--WENATCHEE -- Insurers for two homeowners who suffered losses in the 2013 Colockum Tarps Fire now seek damages from the orchardist whose faulty equipment triggered the blaze.

The lawsuit, brought by Farmers Insurance Co. and Foremost Property and Casualty Insurance Co., is the first against Colockum cherry grower William C. Scroggie, although attorneys say other claims are in the offing -- including a potential suit by the state Department of Natural Resources.

Scroggie, 63, was squarely blamed for the fire's July 27 ignition in a DNR investigative report, which found that an electrical arc from his poorly-wired irrigation pump sparked dry surrounding brush. The blaze consumed 80,000 acres, destroyed four homes and damaged two others.

Subsequent floods in the denuded Colockum Road and Tarpiscan Road area caused further trauma for local residents, forcing many whose homes were left standing by the fires to flee from mudslides and cascading debris. Scroggie's own property was inundated and his home damaged by the August floods.

"This has had a pretty big impact on people in this area," said Issaquah attorney Craig Evezich, who filed the suit in Chelan County Superior Court in April.

Farmers and Foremost seek to recoup losses they paid out to Colockum homeowners Thomas and Roxanne Kendrick and Hollie Harden respectively. The Kendricks' home in the 7200 block of Colockum Road was burned to the foundations. Harden could not be reached Thursday to learn what damage her property in the 7100 block of Tarpiscan Road suffered.

Neither the Kendricks nor Harden are plaintiffs in the suit by their insurers. The case has not been scheduled for trial.

Evezich, who also represents claimants seeking damages for the 2012 Taylor Bridge Fire near Cle Elum, did not disclose the dollar amount he intends to seek from Scroggie. Scroggie's attorney, Andrew Bohrsen of Spokane, said the Farmers and Foremost lawsuit is one of a handful of pending claims against Scroggie -- the largest of them from DNR, which he placed at "over \$1 million."

DNR spokeswoman Sandra Kaiser declined to comment Thursday, as did Alison Dempsey-Hall, spokeswoman for the state attorney general's office.

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