



LAWSUITS & LITIGATION

Detroit Thermal Hit with Class-Action Lawsuit Over Manhole Cover Burns

BRIANNA SMITH — September 24, 2019



Manhole Cover; image courtesy of Photorama via Pixabay, www.pixabay.com

- **Detroit Thermal is in the middle of a class-action lawsuit**
- **filed on behalf of 20 plaintiffs who were allegedly burned by manhole covers.**

Detroit Thermal, a steam company based in Detroit, recently came under fire earlier this week after a group of 20 Michigan and Ohio residents filed a lawsuit against the company. Why was the lawsuit filed? Well, according to the group, “they suffered severe burns and injuries because of the company’s negligence.”



Warning Sign; image courtesy of Peter-Lomas via Pixabay, www.pixabay.com

According to the suit that was filed yesterday, the plaintiff’s, including one as young as 5-years-old, “were burned on their feet and legs by steam from Detroit manhole covers.” The suit further states:

“[Detroit Thermal] negligently failed to control the steam that was emitted from boiling hot steam pipes beneath the street and failed to warn pedestrians and others about the dangerous conditions that ultimately led to victims sustaining burns to their feet, ankles and legs.”

The defendant in the case, Detroit Thermal, “oversees steam distribution and heating and cooling in parts of Detroit, and Project Mist Holdco, which owns Detroit Thermal’s

parent company.”

The suit was filed on behalf of the plaintiffs by Buckfire Law, a Michigan personal injury firm. In the suit, the firm alleges Detroit Thermal was “negligent in controlling manhole steam and warning pedestrians about steam dangers.” As a result of that negligence, 20 people were injured between 2012 and 2019. The victims come from a variety of different counties across Michigan and Ohio, including “Wayne, Washtenaw, Macomb, Oakland, Saginaw and more.”

One of the burn victims was Caleb Tahmouch. He was only 5-years-old when he was burned right outside the “Detroit Science Center in April.” According to the injury report, he was “burned by steam from a downtown or midtown Detroit manhole cover; injuries range from feet burns to burns that also affect legs and ankles.”

As a result of Tahmouch’s injuries and the injuries of the other plaintiffs, the suit is seeking \$25,000 for each victim and notes that all the victims “have suffered pain, disfigurement and scarring, diminished quality of life, and economic losses.”

When commenting on the allegations, Detroit thermal issued the following statement:

“Health and safety are top priorities for Detroit Thermal. Under the direction of new ownership and local leadership, we are working every day to deliver safer, more efficient service for our customers and community. The closing of Detroit Renewable Power in March freed up hundreds of thousands of dollars to invest in improving and modernizing our natural gas facility and underground steam pipes. We strive more than anything to be a good neighbor. Our team constantly monitors the system to identify and perform any necessary maintenance.”

Sources:

Lawsuit alleges 20 people severely burned by Detroit manhole covers, steam

Detroit manhole steam blamed for severe burns on 22 people, sparking class action lawsuit

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