



# Press Release

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Wildfire Victim Advocates Files Wrongful Death Lawsuit Against Southern California Edison On Behalf of Montecito Mudslide Victims**

VENTURA, Calif. – Attorneys with Wildfire Victim Advocates have filed the first of many wrongful death lawsuits against Southern California Edison (SCE) and Edison International on behalf of victims of the Montecito Mudslides. Plaintiffs include Santa Barbara County native and mother Carie Baker-Corey whose life was forever changed on January 9, 2018 after she and twin daughters Summer & Sawyer Corey (12) and their half-sister Morgan Corey (25) were abruptly swept away by a fast-moving debris flow that swallowed-up their home and forced them down Montecito Creek. Carie and Summer were pulled from the debris alive, having suffered life-threatening injuries. Sawyer and Morgan did not survive.

Filed in Los Angeles County Superior Court, the 54-page complaint alleges the Thomas Fire and Montecito Mudslides were the inevitable byproducts of SCE's willful and conscious disregard of public safety. The Los Angeles-based utility knew about California's longstanding drought conditions and the significant risk of power-line wildfires stemming from its unsafe equipment, aging infrastructure and ineffective vegetation management system for many years before the Thomas Fire began. Despite this knowledge, and with strong Santa Ana winds and an abundance of dry vegetation elevating the fire risk, SCE put profits over safety and elected not to de-energize its electrical facilities in Santa Barbara and Ventura counties to minimize the risk of fire and protect the community it serviced. Had SCE acted responsibly and promoted public safety, the Thomas Fire and subsequent mudslides in Montecito could have been prevented, and the lives of Plaintiffs' beloved daughters and sisters spared.

The Thomas Fire burned 281,893 acres and severely damaged the watersheds in Santa Barbara County, setting in motion a chain of horrific events that has devastated families and the community they call home. A landscape once covered with dense thickets of chaparral, brush and tall grass were left barren by the Thomas Fire and when the rain began to fall, deadly flash floods and mudslides swept through Montecito neighborhoods in the early hours of January 9, 2018. Hundreds of homes were destroyed or damaged, dozens of people were injured and 21 lives were lost – the cause of death of each victim identified by the County coroner as "multiple traumatic injuries due to flash flood with mudslides due to recent wildfire." Nearly three months after the Montecito Mudslide began, two people still remain missing.

PANISH SHEA & BOYLE LLP



COTCHETT PITRE & MCCARTHY LLP

The law firms of Panish Shea & Boyle LLP, Walkup, Melodia, Kelly & Schoenberger, Cotchett, Pitre & McCarthy LLP, and Rogers Sheffield & Campbell LLP seek justice for residents and businesses affected by the Thomas Fire and Montecito Mudslides and have joined forces and resources to investigate and prosecute claims for which SCE is responsible. Fires caused by the failure of power lines and poorly maintained equipment owned and operated by utility companies regularly ranks among the top sources of wildfires throughout California. Decades of documented safety violations and SCE's chronic failure to adequately access its equipment and mitigate risks have repeatedly resulted in fines and/or citations against the utility, including over \$78 million in fines levied by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) since 2007 for electric and fire-related incidents.

#### **About Panish Shea & Boyle LLP**

Panish Shea & Boyle LLP is a plaintiff's personal injury law firm that takes on large corporations and government entities whose negligence causes our clients' injuries, and holds them accountable. In addition to obtaining the largest personally injury verdict in US history (\$4.9 billion against General Motors), the attorneys at Panish, Shea & Boyle LLP have repeatedly and consistently obtained some of the largest verdicts against SoCalGas including a \$19.8 million jury verdict in 2014 to a man who suffered severe burn and traumatic brain injuries when his rental home exploded as a result of a Southern California Gas Company's negligence and a \$15 million jury verdict in 2008 against SoCalGas for a 14-year-old boy who was hit by a company truck. Panish Shea & Boyle LLP also represented numerous plaintiffs in the San Bruno PG&E gas explosion cases and is currently representing thousands of clients in individual and class action lawsuits against SoCalGas and Sempra Energy following the October 2015 gas well blowout at the Aliso Canyon Storage Facility in Porter Ranch, California.

#### **About Walkup, Melodia, Kelly & Schoenberger**

As one of the premier personal injury firms in the United States, attorneys at Walkup, Melodia, Kelly & Schoenberger have successfully represented injured people in both state and federal courts, before arbitration hearing boards and in mediation and settlement conferences. For nearly six decades, we have helped establish new law and used personal injury litigation to compel corporations to produce safer products. As leaders in the areas of personal injury and wrongful death litigation, our attorneys have helped shape personal injury law, while securing millions of dollars in financial compensation for injured clients

#### **About Cotchett, Pitre & McCarthy LLP**

Cotchett, Pitre & McCarthy only represents people or entities in cases involving just principles or causes. The key to the firm's success is its experienced attorneys and staff and their innovative approach to litigating complex matters in a cost-effective and efficient manner. Firm attorneys consistently tackles this problem head-on with its teamwork approach to obtaining fair and reasonable resolutions. The firm is also known for the breadth of its practice and the diversity of its clients: CPM attorneys are experienced in personal injury, consumer class actions, state and federal false claims matters, antitrust law, securities actions, and employment law among other practice areas.

#### **About Rogers, Sheffield & Campbell, LLP**

Rogers, Sheffield & Campbell, LLP, has provided sophisticated advice in civil litigation, personal injury, real estate, business, tax and estate planning to Central Coast businesses and individuals since 1973.

