

## Second Layton girl dies in case of possible pesticide poisoning

Layton family: 'We are heartbroken'

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A Layton family has lost its second daughter since toxic pesticide fumes apparently wafted into their home last weekend.

Rachel Toone, 15 months, died Tuesday at Primary Children's Medical Center. Three days earlier her 4-year-old sister, Rebecca, died at Davis Hospital after she had begun struggling to breathe in the family's home.

"We are heartbroken," the Toone family wrote in a press statement announcing Rachel's death. Rachel's health deteriorated after heart failure early Monday, the family wrote.

Authorities suspect the toxic gas phosphine sickened the family. Investigators say the gas may have entered into the family's home after an exterminator dropped Fumitoxin aluminum phosphide pellets in burrow holes in the lawn Friday to kill small rodents known as voles.

Rebecca Toone died Saturday after she grew sick in the family's home. Her parents and siblings also were hospitalized with flu-like symptoms the same day. They were all discharged Sunday, but Rachel fell ill again later that day.

Bugman Pest placed about 1½ pounds of Fumitoxin aluminum phosphide pellets alongside a sidewalk leading to the Toone's front porch, coming within about 7 feet of the front door and 3 feet of the garage, according to a hazardous materials cleanup team from the Utah National Guard.

The pellets are not to be used within 15 feet of any building occupied by people or animals, especially homes, according to a Fumitoxin use manual on the Web site of its manufacturer, Pestcon Systems, Inc.

Phone messages left with Bugman Pest and Lawn on Tuesday were not returned, and owner Ray Wilson declined to speak to a reporter at his home.

Investigators said the phosphine gas collected in an open space under the stairs to the porch and seeped into the house. Crews found elevated levels of phosphine in the entryway, the garage and in what appeared to be a child's bedroom.

On Tuesday, Davis County officials determined the Toone family home is now free of phosphine. A final sweep of the house registered zero readings for phosphine gas, said Fire Chief Kevin Ward.

Davis County Health Department spokesman Bob Ballew said the Toone family was welcome to return home when they are ready.

"We're confident that the risk from the chemical has been cleared," he said.

Layton police Lt. Quinn Moyes said Tuesday that investigators are still working with other agencies to determine what, if any, mistakes could have led to the death of Rebecca and Rachel.

"There are interviews to conduct and we're not ready to screen any possible charges right now," Moyes said. "There may be criminal charges, there may not. It's just too early to tell."

However, according to a report aired by ABC 4 News Tuesday night, Bugman Pest and Lawn has run into problems regarding its use of Fumitoxin before. Reportedly, Utah Department of Agriculture and Food

documents reveal that the first time the company was cited, it was for clerical errors in their record keeping; the second, for the mishandling of certain chemicals.

ABC 4 reports that in the latter case, while the technician was certified, he wasn't certified in the chemicals application process itself.

*Editor's note: A previous version of this story quoted a Sandy woman who thought the death of her dogs was related to the use of Fumitoxin. She has now retracted that statement after confirming the dogs died a week before the application of the pesticide.*

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