

May 12, 2021

Ref. Senate Bill 142, Residential Licensing for Building Trades

My name is Aaron Miller, I moved to Wayne County in 2009. I met my wife here, we bought a house and started a family. I have 3 kids who are 2, 3 and 4 years old.

Like any father, I only want what is best for my family. The water in our house was discolored and smelled. I didn't drink it, and didn't want my kids drinking it, so I started to price out a new water softener.

I found a very reputable company in the area who advertised being best in class. They were very expensive and I thought I was getting a good quality product.

After the install the water softener the water still smelled. I asked them why and they said it was most likely the hot water tank. They asked me if I wanted to replace it and I said yes. They gave me a price and said someone would be out in a few days.

3 days later they came back out, there was only one guy, he looked to be just out of high school, very young. I felt bad because he was moving around that big water tank all by himself.

After the install we noticed a faint smell but chalked it up to new equipment.

As the weeks went on we became accustom to the smell.

Once the temperatures got colder, we shut the windows.

I remember, it was a Monday morning, it had gotten cold that night, so I turned the furnace on before I went to work. When I turned the furnace on, it kicked that smell around the house.

My wife is a stay at home mom and my oldest children have preschool from 8:30-11:30am.

I came home early from work that day around 3pm. When I got home, first thing I noticed was my two boys were both asleep. This seemed strange as they stopped taking naps in the middle of the day. I tried to wake Remy up who was on the couch, he wouldn't wake up. So I went up stairs to wake up Drake, after 20 seconds or so he started moving around, so I went back down stairs to Remy. I finally got him to wake up. He immediately said his head hurt and he thought he had to throw up, and that his heart was beating really fast. My wife then said, she thinks we're all starting to get sick again. I asked her what her symptoms were – she said, headache, fatigue, can't concentrate. I stated I have a headache too. I said it has to be that smell and I then thought it was carbon monoxide.

My wife called 911 and they advised us to get out of the house. EMS came and their CO detector showed 300 ppm in the middle floor of the house. My entire family was rushed to the ER for CO poisoning. My wife and kids had 25% CO in their blood and I had 15%.

EMS told me that if we would have went to sleep that night, we would not have woken up. 100 ppm is fatal in 8 hours and we were at 300 ppm! When you die from carbon monoxide poisoning, you don't peacefully fall asleep. You actually pass out and die from cardiac arrest because you heart can't circulate the blood quick enough to get oxygen to you. When I woke Remy and he complained of his heart racing, he was actually getting ready to go into cardiac arrest. I thank God every day that I came home from work early that day.

The next day, I started trouble shooting what happened over the phone with a friend of mine who is a licensing contactor. The first thing he had me check was if it was a natural gas water heater or a propane water heater. The company had installed a natural gas water heater and I am on a propane system. The natural gas heater uses a bigger orifice compared to the propane. The propane that is under pressure comes in a higher flowrate and cannot fully combust due to the inner workings of the natural gas heater. What did combust mixed with what didn't combust and

created formaldehyde. The flue for the hot water tank was not designed to catch the increased flow rate and the excess started to fill up the furnace room. That smell we were smelling was actually formaldehyde.

I had four fireman looking at my heater for a good 30-45 minutes, and they told me the flue was most likely clogged. None of them knew to look at the label that was on the water heater. What happened was not common knowledge to them or myself. But it was the first thing that a licensed professional looked for.

I ask you, would you put your kids on school bus if the driver didn't have a license? Did you know the bus driver is required to have a CDL? Which covers in-depth vehicle pre-trip inspection, air break knowledge, and passenger weight distribution. The CDL requires you to be an expert on the subject matter to perform the task they are performing.

I asked the VP of the company who did the installation if they used a licensed installer. He said, and I quote "No we do not...the state does not require us to have a licensed installer, but I hope my installer gave you a professional appearance." He was more worried about how his employees dressed then their knowledge and skill set.

I cannot describe the feeling I feel of allowing this to happen to my family and not catching it sooner. I should have acted on the smell. But in reality all of you are indirectly responsible for what happened to my family. Because you are allowing these business to legally operate without a license. We can change this today, you have to power to protect our community and other Ohio families by passing a law to stop this.

Please do the right thing here today. Because next time it won't be me or my family, it might be yours.

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