

BUSINESS

Northern Kentucky hotel must pay \$2M for guest who died after scalding shower

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Travelers usually worried about either hotel security or bed bugs have a new health and safety concern when checking in, thanks to a horrific incident at a Northern Kentucky Econo Lodge: scalding hot showers.

A Kenton County jury has awarded the estate of a Tennessee man \$2 million after a scalding shower in an Erlanger hotel led to the man's death months later, according to a lawsuit.

Alex Chronis, a 76-year-old food vendor who was visiting the Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky region for work in November 2021, was scalded when he tried to take a morning shower at the Econo Lodge at 633 Donaldson Road, according to documents filed in Kenton County Circuit Court.

The lawsuit said the water was more than 150 degrees, which can cause third-degree burns within seconds of exposure. Chronis collapsed in the shower but was pulled out by two coworkers staying in his room who heard his screams.

After using some nonprescription medicine for his burns, Chronis attended a local festival where he worked selling food. He later visited the emergency room at Miami Valley Hospital, but against medical advice, left to continue working.

Chronis returned to the hospital within two days and didn't leave for nearly five months. During his stay, Chronis underwent surgical grafting for his burn wounds. He also developed and was treated for unspecified medical issues.

In April 2022, Chronis' condition stabilized enough for him to be transferred to a rehabilitation facility in his hometown of Knoxville, but his condition did not improve. In June 2022, he was transferred to another hospital in Knoxville where he died.

A Kenton County jury found the hotel owner, Sanjay Patel, “failed to exercise ordinary care in inspecting and maintaining” the hotel room “in a reasonably safe condition for the use of their guests.” Patel owns the hotel, which is incorporated as Aspyn, L.L.C., but does business as “Econo Lodge of Erlanger,” according to the Kentucky Secretary of State.

The judgment filed July 3 included: \$1.3 million for medical expenses; \$250,000 for pain and suffering; \$16,000 for funeral costs; and \$500,000 for punitive damages. The verdict is subject to appeal, court documents say.

Chronis' family had no immediate comment, according to the administrator of his estate.

Patel wasn't immediately available for comment, an attendant at his business told The Enquirer on Tuesday. His attorney did not return a call seeking comment.

Econo Lodge is a budget brand of hotel franchised by North Bethesda, Maryland-based Choice Hotels International, which has more than 6,300 franchised hotels in the U.S., including 675 Econo Lodges, according to an annual report filed with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. Choice Hotels officials did not return messages seeking comment.