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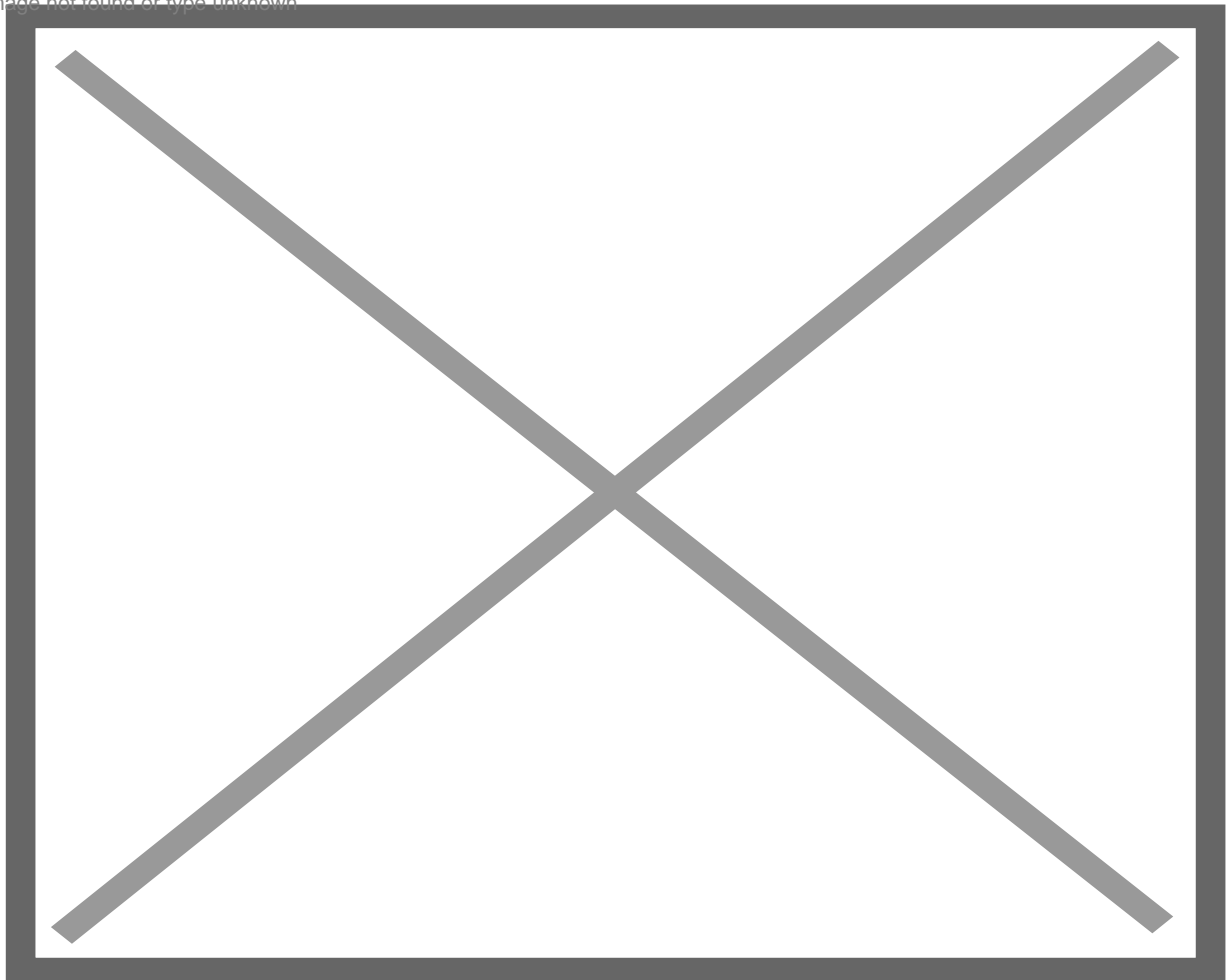
Elderly St. Thomas Woman Sues VI Housing Authority After Ladder Left in Shower Allegedly Leads to Fall

Leonise Grieg-Powell, over 80, claims a ladder left overnight in her bathroom by VIHA staff caused her to slip and fall while trying to remove it. The lawsuit accuses the authority of gross negligence and seeks compensatory and special damages.

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Paul M. Pearson Apartments in St. Thomas.

ST. THOMAS — An elderly resident of Paul M. Pearson Apartments is suing the Virgin Islands Housing Authority for negligence, after she said a ladder left behind in her shower led to injury when she slipped and fell trying to remove it.

According to the civil complaint, Leonise Grieg-Powell has lived in her apartment for over three years, but has resided in units owned by VIHA for over five decades. Ms. Grieg-Powell, who is over the age of eighty and lives alone, is “well known by the management and staff of Defendant,” the lawsuit says.

One afternoon in May, Ms. Grieg-Powell says she came home to discover a ladder leaning against the wall in the bathroom. She concluded that someone from VIHA had been in her apartment while she was out. The knowledge distressed her, as she allegedly had not been informed that someone was scheduled to do work in her apartment, nor had she given permission for anyone to enter her residence while she was gone.

Ms. Grieg-Powell says she immediately contacted the management office to ask that the ladder and any other tools left behind be removed before 5 o'clock that afternoon. She went out again, returning at about 4:45 p.m. to find that the ladder remained. A staff member reportedly passed by to say that he would return, but as of 6:30 that evening, the ladder was still in Ms. Grieg-Powell's bathroom.

A neighbor promised to remove the ladder the next morning – a Saturday – but by about 8 a.m., the ladder was still in position. Ms. Grieg-Powell, the lawsuit declares “is a Caribbean born and raised woman who, always concerned about her health, especially as a woman in the tropical climate in the Virgin Islands which includes heat and humidity, practiced protective hygiene which includes hygienic showers or baths one or more times daily.”

As such, having previously observed that “on weekends, fewer VIHA staff are available or accessible to tenants or to meet tenant needs,” Ms. Grieg-Powell decided that Saturday morning to remove the ladder herself, as she “determined that she had to have a shower at that time,” the lawsuit claims.

In the process of removing the ladder that someone, presumably a VIHA employee, had left behind, the elderly woman allegedly slipped and fell, injuring her head, neck, back, hip, and knee.

She is accusing VIHA of gross negligence when it comes to the maintenance of its units and the training and supervision of its staff. That a ladder was left overnight “in the small shower area of an eighty-year-old woman,” the lawsuit says, only demonstrates the “incompetence and lack of qualifications of Defendant's employees to perform the duties assigned to them.”

Ms. Grieg-Powell is seeking compensatory and special damages for the injuries suffered in the incident. As of press time, VIHA has not filed a response to the lawsuit.