

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Pope Francis Visits Delaware Family Paralyzed By St. John Pesticide Poisoning

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ST. JOHN -- During his 10-day tour of the U.S., Pope Francis made many well documented and publicized stops. He also visited a Delaware family that was poisoned while vacation here in March, who remain paralyzed six months after the incident.

Details on the visit, reported by various U.S. and U.K. news outlets, including [ABC News](#), and confirmed by Brian Tierney, whose company dealt with media for the World Meeting of Families conference that brought the pope to the city, were not divulged, but it is believed that the popular pope prayed for the family that's seen little relief since the incident. He also kissed and blessed them just before departing the U.S. for Rome at the Philadelphia International Airport.

Steve Esmond, 49, and Dr. Theresa Devine, 48, and their two sons Sean, 16, and Ryan, 14, were exposed to the poisonous pesticide methyl bromide [after it was sprayed](#) below their St. John condo.

The parents, while recovering, are still struggling with some of the effects of the banned pesticide, but their sons have not been so fortunate.

The Esmond family was rushed back to their home in Delaware after [becoming critically ill](#) because the operators of their \$800-a-night condo had attempted to deal with insects by spraying the pesticide from Terminix in a unit below theirs.

The family suffered nerve damage, with father Steve being found unconscious while his wife and sons were having seizures. And family members affected worst by the toxic chemicals will never fully recover, according to doctors.

Devine, a dentist, is now in good physical condition. Her husband, an administrator at the private Tatnall School in Wilmington, is slowly getting better but struggles to speak, according to a recent CNN report, via Daily Mail.

Sean and Ryan, who were once known for their skill at lacrosse, are now out of medically-induced comas that lasted for weeks, but have not yet made the strides seen by their parents.

Six months later and the boys can barely move, cannot eat and cannot walk alone. 'Neurologically, it's like being in a torture chamber,' family lawyer James Maron said.

Mediation between Terminix and the family begins Monday and will be done by Ken Feinberg, who mediated settlements for the victims of 9/11.

Terminix's pesticide is illegal in many countries, though the US allows it for agricultural uses. Those using methyl bromide are supposed to add an odor to it so that humans can be aware of the danger. Furthermore, the pesticide's indoor use is banned.

CNN's report detailed a lack of training and empty sections of paperwork in the Esmond case, though the Terminix worker who sprayed the pesticide would not have been taught how to spray methyl bromide because it is not supposed to be used in residences.

Feature Image: The Capri in St. John is one of 22 Sirenusa villas managed and marketed by Sea Glass Vacations

Image Credit: Sea Glass Vacations Facebook page