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# Wrongful death lawsuit filed on behalf of 4 Wisconsin residents killed in I-65 crash

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Emergency personnel work at the scene of a multi-vehicle wreck on Interstate 65 near the 82 mile marker, Saturday, March 2, 2013 north of Sonora, Ky. Kentucky State Police say six people are dead in two crashes that happened near the same location in central Kentucky on Interstate 65. (AP Photo/The News Enterprise, Neal Cardin) / AP

Written by **Jason Riley**  
The Courier-Journal

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A wrongful-death lawsuit has been filed in U.S. District Court in Louisville on behalf of four people who were among six rural Wisconsin residents killed last month when a tractor-trailer rear-ended their Ford Expedition in the northbound lanes of Interstate 65 near Glendale, Ky.

The lawsuit names the Michigan trucking company, Highway Star, and the driver, Ibrahim Fetic, alleging Fetic was driving in "an unsafe manner" when he rear-ended James and Barbara Gollnow,

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who were returning from a trip to Florida with their daughter, Sereena Gollnow, 18, a family friend and four foster children.

On March 2, the Gollnows, their foster children Gabriel Zumig, 10, and Soledad Smith, 8, their adopted daughter Sereena Gollnow, and their friend Marion Chamnoise were “trapped inside the vehicle while it burned, resulting in their deaths,” according to the suit. Two minors escaped the vehicle.

The lawsuit claims Fetic had driven his truck in excess of the allowed number of hours, which resulted in driver fatigue, and was maintaining two sets of driver log books in an effort to hide information from regulatory agencies.

“The Gollnows were saints,” said attorney Tad Thomas, who along with Ronald Hillerich represents the plaintiffs. “They took in foster children and the elderly and cared for them. So this is a tragedy that affected many lives, not just those in the vehicle.”

The lawsuit is seeking compensatory and punitive damages and a trial by jury.

A call to an attorney representing Highway Star was not immediately returned.

Claims made in filing a lawsuit present only one side of the case.

On March 22, the U.S. Department of Transportation ordered Highway Star to immediately cease operations and declared the company to be an imminent hazard to public safety for failing to ensure its drivers complied with federal safety regulations, according to a news release.

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration also declared Fetic an imminent hazard and ordered him to immediately cease all commercial motor vehicle operations because of his failure to comply with federal hours-of-service regulations.

An investigation showed Fetic had been driving well in excess of regulations and had falsified his record-of-duty status log, according to the Department of Transportation.

The investigation also found that Highway Star allowed or required its drivers to falsify their records-of-duty status and failed to preserve the records, resulting in the company being unable to monitor its drivers’ compliance with regulations setting maximum hours of service and requiring off-duty and rest hours.

**Reporter Jason Riley can be reached at 584-2197 or on twitter @jasonrileyCJ.**

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