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Meth contamination turns dream home to nightmare

MOORESVILLE, Ind. – A Marine Corps veteran who hoped to retire with his family to a house near Indianapolis is caught in a legal nightmare since discovering that the home he and his wife bought and remodeled is contaminated with methamphetamine.

Chris and Jennifer Nugent bought the house in Mooresville, about 15 miles southwest of Indianapolis, in May 2013. They hired a home inspector, who found no evidence of termites or mold.

But six months later, the Nugents' children were suffering repeated bouts of coughing, vomiting and diarrhea. Chris and Jennifer Nugent found themselves short of breath and unexplainably fatigued.

"Everybody felt like they were having asthma attacks. None of us have asthma," Chris Nugent told WRTV-TV (<http://bit.ly/1lwAUjT>).

The answers came in two do-it-yourself test kits: The home was contaminated with methamphetamine, with upstairs rooms measuring three times the state-accepted level and downstairs rooms nearly 18 times higher than acceptable levels.

"They just purposely poisoned our children," Jennifer Nugent said. "I don't know how people can do that. Shame on them."

The Nugents, who have vacated the property and use gloves and a mask if they must enter, are now caught in a legal battle. Carpenter Realtors, which sold the home, doesn't believe it or its listing agent should be held responsible. The couple's insurance company, Indiana Farm Bureau, won't pay to clean up the property – a task that can cost \$10,000 – because their policy contains exclusions for pollution and "latent defects."

Experts say it's unlikely the Nugents could have known the property was contaminated. Indiana State Police find only 20 percent of operational labs, according to 1st Sgt. Niki Crawford, and their records don't show any meth reports at the address.

Crawford said it's impossible to know how many homes are polluted by meth.

"They can have significant amounts of contamination in these homes and never know it," Crawford said. "There might not be any staining because they didn't spill anything or they did clean up after themselves. The vast majority is through gas, so that is how it gets into the walls, into the carpet and into the air systems.

"If we as law enforcement never know there was a lab there, there's no way for that homeowner to know either," Crawford said.

Starting July 1, all home sellers will be required to disclose whether a property was contaminated by meth. Another related law will introduce a registry that will list all homes and vehicles yet to be decontaminated after a meth bust.

But for now, the Nugents are at a loss. Their home is unlivable.

"No one should be able to get away with this," Jennifer Nugent said.

Information from: WRTV-TV, <http://www.theindychannel.com/index.html>

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