

Synopsis

The lawsuit highlighted the awareness for the owners, installers and state to mandate that the caregivers check their equipment before each procedure is performed, credentialing of installers and verification testing.

Cross-Connection N₂O / O₂ – Accident – 1 Fatality

Severity

Construction, Life Safety

Source

News Source: The Dallas Morning News, Metropolitan

Source Date

Saturday, November 23, 1991

Melissa Ryder died June 21, 1990, in a newly opened professional building on Forest Lane in North Dallas, Texas. Her parents had taken her there, after carefully scouting several offices, to have a birthmark removed from her face. Doctors anesthetized the girl using a mixture of nitrous oxide instead of pure oxygen when the operation was over.

The couple later learned that the pipes supplying the room with both gases had been crossed and mislabeled when they were installed. The lines were never checked before Melissa's operation, the doctors didn't realize what was happening until it was too late. It wasn't just one person that didn't do their job; it was five or six people and companies that didn't do their job.

The Ryders sued the dermatologist, the company that manufactured the medical gas equipment, the firm that sold the medical gas equipment, the company that installed the equipment, the company that designed the system, and the company that leased the building space to the doctors office.