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## Widow files suit in bridge death

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This railroad bridge over the Elkhorn River collapsed in June.

The widow of a Norfolk, Neb., man who died in June when a railroad bridge collapsed into the Elkhorn River has filed a wrongful death lawsuit against Union Pacific Railroad and Nebraska Central Railroad over the bridge's collapse.

Suzie Scholl filed the lawsuit over the death of her husband, 38-year-old Jeff Scholl, who had been sent with two other Nebraska Central Railroad workers to the rail bridge to check out reports that the bridge had shifted because of the raging waters of the Elkhorn River below.

Shortly after the three arrived at the bridge in Norfolk, it collapsed. The three either jumped or fell into the river below.

The two other workers survived. Scholl drowned, his death the cruel low point of a June that was filled with torrential rains.

Suzie Scholl filed the lawsuit in Douglas County District Court, saying her husband should not have been sent to the bridge in the condition it was in. His death deprived her of a lifelong companion and their young children of their father, the lawsuit says.

At the time, Jeff and Suzie Scholl's two boys, Ryan and Brendan, were 6 and 3. After Jeff Scholl's death, Suzie Scholl learned she was pregnant with the couple's third child.

She later gave birth to the couple's daughter, Allie Jeffrie Scholl.

Her attorney, Richard Dinsmore of Omaha, wrote in the lawsuit that Union Pacific owned the railroad tracks and bridges and leased them to Nebraska Central Railroad Co. and Rio Grande Pacific Corp. of Fort Worth, Texas.

The lawsuit alleges that Union Pacific "failed to properly design, construct, inspect, maintain and repair" the bridge.

It also alleges that by sending the three workers to the bridge, Nebraska Central placed Scholl in "immediate peril" and failed to protect him "from a dangerous situation."

Union Pacific spokesman Mark Davis declined to comment. The defendants have 30 days to file a response in court.

Jayson Nelson, Dinsmore's co-counsel on the case, said reports indicate that the three workers were sent to inspect whether the raging Elkhorn River had caused the bridge to shift.

Nelson said onlookers have reported that they could tell just by looking at the bridge that the tracks had bowed.

"One of the questions we raise is 'Should they have sent them out on that bridge when it was obviously damaged?'" Nelson said. "It was terrifically bad timing."

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