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Pinal jury finds against stove maker

By Nick Martin
Tribune

A Pinal County jury on Thursday handed down a huge civil award to a family whose two boys were badly burned in a fire apparently caused by a faulty stove.

The manufacturer, Electrolux Home Products, was ordered to pay the Kavu family of Stanfield \$43.1 million.

"They're just elated," said the family's attorney, Matt Cunningham. "They're very happy with the jury's decision."

The two boys, ages 3 and 12 at the time of the accident, were burned in April 2004 when a fire flared up inside their home in the small town just west of Casa Grande.

The older brother, Jeffrey, was burned over 50 percent of his body. The younger, Benson, suffered burns to his head and face, amounting to about 15 percent of his body.

The family believed that their gas stove was to blame and filed suit in 2006.

The award is one of the largest an Arizona jury has returned.

"It's staggering," said attorney Robert Greer, who represented Electrolux, a Swedish company whose American headquarters are in a suburb of Augusta, Ga.

The company previously offered to settle with the family, he said, but the Kavus turned it down. Greer declined to say how much the company offered.

The company plans to appeal, and Greer said Electrolux believes the amount of the award was too high and he hopes the judge will "fix it."

"We're still processing and working through it," Greer said. "This was not a product failure."

Electrolux's most well-known U.S. products are from its Frigidaire line of home appliances, which includes stoves, refrigerators and dishwashers.

News reports show a Pennsylvania woman filed a similar suit last year against Electrolux after her stove exploded. That case is still pending.