

Parental Warning: Lawsuit Accuses Amazon of Selling 'Suicide Kits' to Teens

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Two families who lost their teenagers to suicide have filed a lawsuit against e-commerce giant Amazon, accusing the company of selling so-called "suicide kits" containing a food preservative that is fatal at high levels of purity.

The parents of 16-year-old Kristine Jónsson of Ohio and the parents of 17-year-old Ethan McCarthy of West Virginia said the company assisted in the teens' deaths by selling them sodium nitrite, NPR reported.

If a person ingests enough of this substance, it can interfere with the body's red blood cells' ability to transport oxygen. This dangerous and potentially fatal condition is called methemoglobinemia, according to the Missouri Poison Center's website.

The families filed a complaint in a California state court last month arguing, "Along with Sodium Nitrite, Amazon recommends that customers also purchase a small scale to measure the right dose, Tagamet to prevent vomiting up the liquid, and the 'Amazon edition' of the "Peaceful Pill Handbook" which contains a chapter with instructions on how to administer these ingredients together to die."

Court documents reveal online websites and suicide forums frequently discuss the use of the chemical.

Jónsson took her life in September 2020. And McCarthy took his own life in January 2020.

"Amazon is selling a product that is as deadly as cyanide,"

Carrie Goldberg and Naomi Leeds, two attorneys for the families from the firm C.A. Goldberg, PLLC, said in a statement, according to the outlet.

“This is different from them selling rope, knives or other implements that can be used for death because there is no household use for {sodium nitrate} at the level of purity (98-99%) it sells it,” the attorneys said.

Note: If you or someone you know is feeling suicidal or in distress, please call the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at 988. Nine-eight-eight has been designated as the new three-digit dialing code that is now active across the United States. When people call, text or chat 988, they will be connected to trained counselors that are part of the existing Lifeline network. These trained counselors will listen, understand how their problems are affecting them, provide support and connect them to resources if necessary.

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