

Voir Dire Questions

The Standard Fire Insurance Co. v. Electrolux Home Products, Inc. 08-cv-540-slc

- (1) **Statement of the case.** This is a civil lawsuit involving a clothes dryer that caught on fire on January 29, 2007 in Julie Newcomb's home in Janesville, Wisconsin, causing damage to Ms. Newcomb's house and personal property. Ms. Newcomb was insured by The Standard Fire Insurance Company, which is the plaintiff in this lawsuit. The insurance company is suing the company that designed and built the dryer, defendant Electrolux Home Products, Incorporated.

Standard Fire Insurance Company contends that Electrolux negligently designed, manufactured, distributed and sold the dryer, and that a defect in the dryer caused the fire in Ms. Newcomb's home.

Defendant Electrolux denies that it was negligent, it disputes the existence of any defect in the dryer and it denies that it is liable for the damages suffered by Ms. Newcomb. Defendant also contends that the fire was caused by Ms. Newcomb's or someone else's negligence or misuse of the dryer.

Have any of you heard of this case before today? Do you think that what you heard would affect your ability to be an impartial juror in this case?

- (2) The trial of this case will begin today, February 22, and will be over by this Friday, February 26. Would any of you actually be unable to serve as a juror during this time?
- (3) [Ask counsel to stand and tell the jury where they practice and with whom. Ask panel whether anyone knows counsel or their law firms.]
- (4) [Ask counsel to introduce their clients and any parent or major subsidiaries. Ask whether anyone on the panel owns stock, has had business dealings, or has been employed by any of these entities.]
- (5) I am going to read a list of people who might be witnesses in this trial. If you think you know any of these people, please raise your hand and I will follow up with you:

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| a. Jack Sanderson | g. David Beauregard |
| b. Carl King | h. Karen M. Stetler |
| c. Thomas Bajzek | i. John Swenson |
| d. Craig A. Jones | j. Julie Newcomb |
| e. Robert Geschke | k. Jamie Newcomb |
| f. James Dudzinski | l. Ronald E. Parsons |

(6) Please stand and tell us the following information about yourself:.

Name, age, and city or town of residence and how long you have lived there.

Marital or partnership status and number of children, if any.

Current occupation (former if retired) and your job responsibilities, including any management or supervisory responsibilities.

Current (or former) occupation of your spouse or domestic partner and any adult children.

Any military service, including branch, rank and approximate date of discharge.

How far you went in school and major areas of study, if any.

Any certificates, trade school classes or any other educational experiences that you have received outside of high school and college.

Memberships in any groups, clubs or organizations.

Hobbies and leisure-time activities.

Favorite types of reading material, including magazines, newspapers and books.

Favorite types of television shows and radio programs.

Websites you visit on a daily or weekly basis for work or leisure.

Whether you do or help with the laundry at home, and if so, how often you clean the lint trap in the dryer.

(7) Do any of you know any of the other people in the jury box from before today?

(8) Have any of you or members of your family had training or experience in these fields:

- a. Engineering or product design
- b. Appliance sales, manufacturing or design
- c. Testing machines or appliances.
- d. Fire fighting
- e. Insurance
- f. Statistics

Would this affect your ability to be impartial in this case?

- (9) How many of you have purchased a major appliance in the last five years or so? How many of you read the manual that came with the appliance?
- (10) Have any of you ever personally installed or helped install an electric clothes dryer in your home or someone else's home?
- (11) Have you purchased any devices to add to your dryer in connection with the ducting?
- (12) Are you familiar with any articles, or websites or television programs dealing with the issue of dryer fires?
- (13) Do any of you believe that because this case deals with a fire that started in a dryer, the company that made the dryer probably is to blame?
- (14) Do any of you feel that big companies generally don't care enough about the safety of their product?
- (13) Have you are any member of your family every been involved in a house fire? If so, please tell us:
- a. When did the fire occur?
 - b. How did the fire occur?
 - c. What kind of damage did the fire cause?
 - d. Did anyone make a claim to an insurance carrier? What happened?

Would any of this affect your ability to be impartial in this case?

- (14) Other than what you already have told us, have you or your family members ever made a claim to your homeowner's insurance carrier? If so, how was it resolved?
- (15) Have any of you worked or volunteered for a lawyer or a law firm?
- (16) Do any of you know any judges or court personnel in any court?
- (17) Prior court experience:
- a. Have any of you ever been a party to a lawsuit? Describe circumstances (type of lawsuit, attorneys involved, how case resolved).
 - b. Have any of you ever been a witness in a lawsuit? Describe circumstances (type of lawsuit, involvement, how case resolved).
 - c. How many of you have served previously on a jury? Please tell us which court, approximately when, the type of case, the verdict you reached, and whether you were the foreperson.

- (18) Do any of you have opinions, whether positive or negative, about people who go to court to obtain relief for wrongs they believe they have suffered?
- (19) At the end of the case I will give you instructions that will govern your deliberations. You are required to follow those instructions, even if you do not agree with them. Is there any one of you who would be unable or unwilling to follow the instructions?
- (20) Do any of you know of any reason whatsoever why you could not sit as a trial juror with absolute impartiality to all the parties in this case?

JUROR BACKGROUND INFORMATION

When asked to do so by the court, please stand and provide the following information:

- (1) Name, age, and city or town of residence and how long you have lived there.
- (2) Marital or partnership status and number of children, if any.
- (3) Current occupation (former if retired), how long you have held this job, and your job responsibilities, including any management or supervisory responsibilities.
- (4) Current (or former) occupation of your spouse or domestic partner and any adult children.
- (5) Any military service, including branch, rank and date of discharge.
- (6) How far you went in school and major areas of study, if any.
- (7) Any certificates, trade school classes or other educational experiences that you have received outside of high school and college.
- (8) Memberships in any groups, clubs or organizations.
- (9) Hobbies and leisure-time activities.
- (10) Favorite types of reading material, including magazines, newspapers and books.
- (11) Favorite types of television shows and radio programs.
- (12) Websites you visit on a daily or weekly basis for work or leisure.
- (13) Whether you do or help with the laundry at home, and if so, how often you clean the lint trap in the dryer.