Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters Fatality File



Electricians charged in electrocution of man at southwest Houston hotel pool

The incident happened August 31 at the Westchase Hilton and Towers on Westheimer.

Raul Hernandez, 27 was electrocuted while saving his mother and brother, who said they also felt shocks while in the water. Hernandez collapsed as soon as he got out of the pool and went into cardiac arrest. He was taken off life support on September 6 and died.

“He was the positive male role model in my life,” said Hernandez’s brother, Carlos Hernandez. “He always did put other people’s needs before his own.”

On Friday, electricians Jason Joseph Gorczyca, 35, and James Ray Pyle, 34, were charged with criminally negligent homicide, a state jail felony that is punishable by as much as two years in prison and a $10,000 fine. Authorities say the two failed to install a device that would have prevented the electrical charge that killed Hernandez.

“There was no GFCI protector, a ground fault circuit interrupter, which would have shut down the electricity immediately. So that was not there, and that’s one of the fundamental reasons why the electricians have been charged,” said John Thomas, the civil lawyer representing Hernandez’s family.

“Had they done it, then in all likelihood when there was a problem in that pool, this individual who was killed would not have died,” Harris County prosecutor Bill Exley said.

The family has also filed a wrongful death civil lawsuit against Hilton and the Brown Electric Company, the contracted company for the hotel, to achieve one goal.