Shiftwork – Restaurants Fatality File



Houston woman found by son dead in Louisiana Arby's walk-in freezer

NEW IBERIA, Louisiana (KTRK) – A Houston woman was found dead in an Arby's walk-in freezer by her son in New Iberia, Louisiana. Now the family is suing the restaurant, alleging they knew a handle inside the freezer was broken for months.

Nguyet Le, 63, died on May 11 and the details of her death, outlined in a lawsuit, are frightening.

According to the lawsuit, Le moved temporarily from Houston to New Iberia with her son. She was managing an Arby's in Houston but was moved by the owner of the store to help the Louisiana location. The legal filing says originally she was set to be there for four weeks but the temporary placement was extended an additional two weeks.

The lawsuit goes on to detail that the morning of May 11, Le went into the Arby's to begin prepping the fast food restaurant for opening. We learn she went into the store's walk-in freezer when the door closed behind her and locked. The family's lawyer, Paul Skrabanek, said the store owners knew since last year that the door was broken.

"From talking with authorities, there was something broken about the latch and I don't have specifics but whatever it was they were routinely keeping the door open with a box of oil, apparently," Skrabanek said.

The documents say a screwdriver was routinely used to open the door.

Sadly, it's detailed Le's son was the one to find her face down, dead. The inside of the freezer was bloodied where she tried to escape. The family lawyer said over the phone, the freezer trapped someone else after Le's death. Thankfully, they were luckier.

"The officers told us he went out there to inspect it himself and got locked into the freezer and had a panic moment," Skrabanek said.

The lawsuit alleges the freezer is kept at -10 degrees or colder.

We reached out to Turbo Restaurants which owns the Arby's but have not heard back. The preliminary autopsy results say hypothermia was the cause of death.