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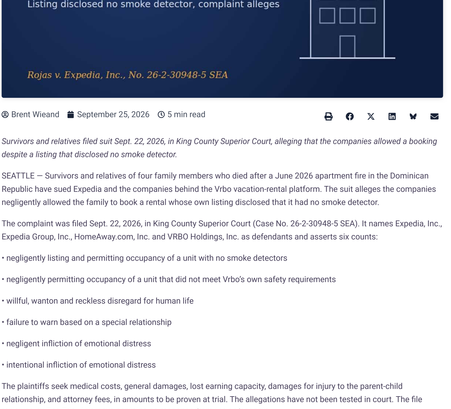
Personal Injury

Lawsuit Says Expedia, Vrbo Let Family Book Dominican Rental Listed With No Smoke Detector Before Fire That Killed Four



Brent Wieand | September 25, 2026 | 5 min read

Survivors and relatives filed suit Sept. 22, 2026, in King County Superior Court, alleging that the companies allowed a booking despite a listing that disclosed no smoke detector.

SEATTLE — Survivors and relatives of four family members who died after a June 2026 apartment fire in the Dominican Republic have sued Expedia and the companies behind the Vrbo vacation-rental platform. The suit alleges the companies negligently allowed the family to book a rental whose own listing disclosed that it had no smoke detector.

The complaint was filed Sept. 22, 2026, in King County Superior Court (Case No. 26-2-30948-5 SEA). It names Expedia, Inc., Expedia Group, Inc., HomeAway.com, Inc. and VRBO Holdings, Inc. as defendants and asserts six counts:

• negligently listing and permitting occupancy of a unit with no smoke detectors

• negligently permitting occupancy of a unit that did not meet Vrbo's own safety requirements

• willful, wanton and reckless disregard for human life

• failure to warn based on a special relationship

• negligent infliction of emotional distress

• intentional infliction of emotional distress

The plaintiffs seek medical costs, general damages, lost earning capacity, damages for injury to the parent-child relationship, and attorney fees, in amounts to be proven at trial. The allegations have not been tested in court. The file reviewed by The Trial Attorneys contains no response from the defendants.

A family trip

According to the complaint, Josmeli Rojas and her cousin, Lucybeldriz Rodriguez Sosa, planned a three-week trip to the Dominican Republic, where both were born, for three generations of their family. The highlight was to be the christening of Rojas' two young sons on June 21, 2026.

Rodriguez Sosa found a fourth-floor apartment in Barahona through Expedia and paid for a June 12-16 stay through Vrbo, the complaint states. The listing advertised three bedrooms, three baths and space for 12. Under a "Safety" heading, it said the host had indicated there was no smoke detector and no carbon monoxide detector on the property, according to the filing.

Eleven relatives and a family friend arrived about 6 p.m. on June 12. In the early morning hours of June 13, fire engulfed the apartment. No alarm warned the sleeping family because there were none, the complaint alleges.

Four people died, according to the complaint: Jhoselin Del Carmen Sosa Amaro, 69; her 5-year-old grandson, Royce David Cedano Rojas; Rodriguez Sosa, 42; and Rodriguez Sosa's mother, Pancracia Mercedes Sosa Amaro, 74. Royce died June 13 and Rodriguez Sosa died June 19. The two sisters, Jhoselin and Pancracia, died June 21, when the boys' christening had been planned. Rojas, her 3-year-old son Zander and 16-year-old Destiny Salas were hospitalized, while other relatives were treated for injuries, the complaint says.

The companies' own safety rules

The lawsuit centers on Vrbo's "Safety Essentials" guidance. According to the complaint, that guidance calls for smoke and carbon monoxide alarms outside each sleeping area or in the bedroom, and the platform asks hosts to disclose whether a property has them. The plaintiffs contend that the companies set safety expectations but continued to list properties whose hosts disclosed that they lacked smoke detectors.

The complaint alleges that amenities were displayed prominently while safety disclosures sat in a secondary section that users had to find on their own. It says the companies could have blocked bookings of listings without smoke detectors, required a warning and acknowledgment before payment, offered an equally prominent safety filter, or tied search boosts and "Premier Host" status to compliance. The complaint alleges that none of the criteria for Premier Host status involves life-safety equipment.

The plaintiffs frame their claims around the companies' own design and business decisions, not the wording of any host's property description. The complaint also acknowledges that the companies' terms of service seek to disclaim responsibility for the safety of listed properties.

Counsel's searches after the fire

The complaint describes searches by plaintiffs' counsel on July 22 and Aug. 1–2, 2026, in three Dominican locations. In the first search, the complaint reports 3 of 14 listings in Barahona, 4 of 15 in La Cienaga, and 33 of 139 in Caño Seco as having smoke detectors. Its accompanying percentages—17%, 21% and 19%—do not match those counts; the calculated figures are approximately 21%, 27% and 24%. In the second search, it reports 10 of 29, 10 of 29 and 76 of 228, respectively, or roughly one-third.

From those results, the plaintiffs contend that most Dominican listings on the platform lacked smoke detectors in the weeks after the fire.

Corporate structure and venue

The complaint alleges Expedia Group directs its subsidiaries from its Seattle headquarters. It says HomeAway operates the Vrbo website, and it contends the companies function as a single enterprise. It asserts that King County is a proper venue.

The plaintiffs are represented by Diamond Massong PLLC of Seattle and by Farrah Law and Meehan Boyle, a division of Keches Law Group P.C., of Boston, whose attorneys stated they would seek admission pro hac vice.

Read the full complaint: *Rojas v. Expedia, Inc.*, No. 26-2-30948-5 SEA — King County Superior Court Complaint (Sept. 22, 2026)

By The Trial Attorneys Editorial Staff

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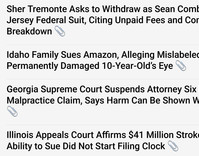

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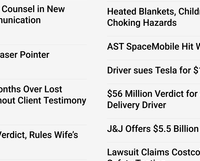

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