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## Judge wants fire records preserved

### Lawyer for the victim's widow plans inspection of South Shore building

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Cook County Associate Judge Franklin U. Valderrama ordered a condominium association and the city of Chicago to preserve all documents, recordings and photos related to a Jan. 22 fatal high-rise fire that killed two people.

The judge on Monday also ordered the entities to halt further cleanup on the seventh floor of the South Shore Drive building where the fire occurred. Two people died in the incident, Jameel Johnson, 36, and John Fasula Jr., 50.

Fasula's widow filed an emergency bill of discovery last week to allow for a private investigation. Lakefront Condominium Association, First Properties LLC and the city of Chicago got named as

respondents.

"Obviously, fires like this don't normally occur without the fault of either some product, the premises itself, sometimes human beings," said Michael K. Demetrio, a partner at Corboy & Demetrio P.C. who represents Fasula's widow, Patricia Fasula.

John Fasula, a father of three who lived in Bridgeport, performed restoration work in the building, located at 6730 S. South Shore Drive, when he heard a woman calling for help on the seventh floor, Demetrio said.

Media outlets reported that Fasula and Johnson led the woman to an elevator and then died trying to extinguish the fire.

"That's the reports, but I'm going to make sure everything is verified," Demetrio said.

Valderrama ordered the entities to preserve photographs and video taken on the day of the fire, all inspection and maintenance records in the last year, a list of names and addresses of anyone who conducted maintenance or inspection work in the last year, 911 phone call recordings pertaining to the fire, city



Michael K. Demetrio

inspection records and other similar documents.

The judge also ordered the respondents to allow the law firm to conduct its inspection and prohibited the respondents from further cleanup of seventh floor common areas.

Demetrio plans to bring in an electrical engineer and an expert on fire causes to help determine what happened, and who, if anyone, might get named in a lawsuit, Demetrio said.

"Rather than speculate about it, I'm going to find out about it," Demetrio said. "I'm going in there with a totally open mind, open eyes and some excellent experts."

Demetrio said his investigation will occur separately from any Chicago Fire Department investigation.

"There are different issues that the city may be looking at than the ones I have to look at in order to preserve the family's legal rights," Demetrio said.

Kellie J. Sellman of Gardiner, Koch, Weisberg & Wrona represents Lakefront Condominium Association, Demetrio said. A representative from First Properties LLC did not appear in court yesterday, Demetrio said.

Sellman could not be reached for comment.

Assistant Corporation Counsel Elizabeth K. Sichi represents the city, Demetrio said. A spokesman for the city Law Department could not be reached for comment.

The case is *Patricia Fasula, et al. v. Lakefront Condominium Association, et al.* 2013 CH 02209.