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## **News 15 Investigates: Homeowners say D.R. Horton left them 'Stuck in Hell'**

Anchor Jeff Horchak

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(KADN) — The Dixon family from Youngsville, along with hundreds of families across south Louisiana, has filed a massive class action lawsuit against D.R. Horton Homebuilders and Bell Mechanical. The lawsuit claims their homes were constructed improperly, causing massive mold buildup and water damage.

News 15 investigates is digging into why this happened and if these homeowners can get some compensation.

West and Alicia Dixon bought their brand new home in Youngsville in 2014. Several years later, the problems started to arise.

"Starting smelling the mold three or four years after I kept getting sick with respiratory issues," said Alicia Dixon.

According to the Dixons, the design of the home does not work in south Louisiana with the high humidity, which has caused the mold and water damage.

"When they built the home, they did not create enough attic space. So, our home is acting like a vacuum, pulling the heat in which is creating the moisture," explained

Alicia Dixon.

News 15 acquired audio from a conversation back in 2021 between then D.R. Horton city manager of Louisiana's west division, Leslie Gulliksen, and a disgruntled D.R. Horton homeowner in Acadiana. She admitted they knew certain building envelopes were not suited for south Louisiana's climate.

"The code that was built was designed for dryer climates and we have issues along the Gulf Coast that are very humid, the houses being built too tight," said Gulliksen. "And we are building them to the way the federal government says to, then, the man who actually wrote the code did a seminar and said with the A/C people never intended that to be the rules in the South."

Lance Unglesby, the lead attorney in the class action lawsuit case, is representing families from Lake Charles to Slidell, who bought homes. He said new results just back from mold tests show the homes have elevated levels of mold that are harmful. He added D.R. Horton has to be held accountable.

"These guys are fraudsters," said Unglesby. "They need to be kicked out of Louisiana. Bell Mechanical is a Louisiana company. They need to be kicked out of Louisiana. They can't do quality work, and not only can they not do quality work, they keep lying to all these homeowners."

"That's the scary thing, the issues and the mold and stuff we are having in here," said West Dixon. "The longer we have to stay, what kind of health effects are we gonna have down the road?"

Living in a home they say has suffered more than \$100,000 worth of mold and water damage, the Dixons feel trapped.

"We can't afford to go anywhere else and pay two house notes, so you're kinda stuck in hell," explained West Dixon.

I reached out to D.R. Horton's corporate office for a statement on this pending lawsuit.

I did not get a response.

News 15 Investigates also has learned that D.R. Horton is still building homes with the building envelopes in south Louisiana that are having these issues. Right now, the Dixon vs. D.R. Horton and Bell Mechanical class action lawsuit is headed back to state court at the end of the month.

This is a positive for the Dixons and other south Louisiana D.R. Horton homeowners in this lawsuit. Another good sign for these Louisiana homeowners is the fact that homeowners in South Carolina won a \$20 million class action lawsuit vs. D.R. Horton in September.

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