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## Manoa family sues tree trimmer

By [Ken Kobayashi](#)

Advertiser Courts Writer

The parents of a 12-year-old Manoa girl who was severely injured when an 80-foot-tall tree fell into her bedroom sued the company hired by the city to trim the Norfolk pine.

The suit yesterday by Debbie and Thomas Lee Engle, parents of Julia Engle, said Nilasoni Landscape Inc. also was supposed to maintain the tree, but failed to notify the city that the pine posed a hazard because of extensive termite damage.

"The miss by the Nilasoni people, frankly, was egregious," said the Engles' lawyer, Rick Fried.

The city, owner of the 100-year-old tree, was not named in the lawsuit. The city hired Nilasoni to maintain about 1,760 city trees, including those along Beckwith Street where the Engles live.

Fried said a decision on whether to sue the city will be made after more investigation, but he said the city has been "extraordinarily cooperative" in removing other trees and providing information.

David Louie, Nilasoni's lawyer, said he and the company would not comment.

The lawsuit does not mention the amount the family will be seeking, but Fried said it will be in the millions of dollars. Medical bills for Julia already are in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, he said.

Julia, a Punahou Middle School seventh-grader, was sleeping in her second-story bedroom when the tree that grew in a yard across the street crashed into the home in the early morning of March 15.

She suffered severe head injuries and remained at The Queen's Medical Center until April 15, when she was transferred to the Rehabilitation Hospital of the Pacific. She was released on Friday and is at home.

Fried said Julia is talking, able to read and "improving all the time," but still a "long way" from being able to return to school.

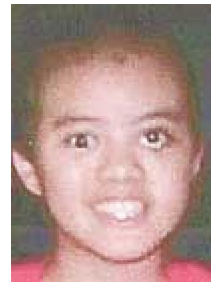
Julia faces the prospect of permanent brain damage, and it will be months before her doctors will know for sure how she will end up, Fried said.

Nilasoni was awarded the city contract to maintain city trees at \$45 a tree when other bidders proposed charging as much as \$110, Fried said.

The lawsuit said Nilasoni was required to have a qualified arborist to make sure people and property would be protected from injury or damage from the trees. Its workers inspected and pruned the trees along Beckwith Street in November, the suit said.

The 80-foot pine had clear signs of disease and termite damage from the sap and gum deposits, but the hazardous tree was not reported, the suit said. Fried said about 84 percent of the inside of the tree's base was hollow from termites.

Reach Ken Kobayashi at 525-8030 or [kkobayashi@honoluluadvertiser.com](mailto:kkobayashi@honoluluadvertiser.com).



Julia Engle