

8 years after Williams Twp. landfill landslide, Chrin settles \$20M lawsuit out of court

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Piled-up dirt and liquefied trash slid downhill at the Chrin Brothers Sanitary Landfill on March 13, 2013. The landslide forced the closure of Industrial Drive between Morgan Hill Road and Morvale Road in Williams Township. Express-Times file photo | Matt Smith



By **Rudy Miller** | **For lehighvalleylive.com**

Chrin Brothers, Inc., has settled out of court with the company it blamed for installing a liner that failed during a landslide and contributed to damage at its Williams Township landfill eight years ago.

The landslide on March 12, 2013, cost \$20 million to clean up and investigate, according to a pre-trial memorandum filed earlier this year by Chrin Brothers.

The settlement comes four days before jury selection was set to begin in Northampton County Court.

The landslide disturbed more than 12 acres of the Chrin Brothers Sanitary Landfill, sending thousands of cubic yards of nearly-liquified garbage 80 feet downhill, according to court documents filed in Northampton County.

A protective liner over the waste tore, the court records say. The liner was installed by a predecessor company of Civil & Environmental Consultants Inc. of Langhorne, Pa., court records say.

Attorney John P. Judge confirmed in an email that the parties settled Thursday.

“The terms and conditions are confidential. The parties will have no further comment on the matter,” Judge said. Judge represents Chrin Brothers of Palmer Township. He works for Land, Air, Water Legal Solutions of Berwyn, Pa.

Civil and Environmental Consultants is represented in the case by attorneys Keith E. Whitson and Jonathan B. Skowron of Pittsburgh. The company was formerly known as GSE Environmental and GSE Lining Technology, court records say. Whitson confirmed Friday that the case settled out of court.

Chrin’s pre-trial memorandum says the liner that was too thin and on too steep a slope. Civil & Environmental Consultants’ memo says the liner was installed properly and met applicable standards.

Chrin’s memo says an earthquake from 2011 loosened the liner. Civil & Environmental Consultants’ memo says water had been leaking into the area for about two years. Chrin ignored the warning signs and the water eventually breached the liner, the memo says.

The landslide closed Industrial Boulevard in Williams Township for months. The trash that slid downhill was capped with a foot of clay, topped by a geosynthetic membrane and then topped with soil and grass, a Williams Township official told lehighvalleylive.com in 2013.

At the direction of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, Chrin had to move much of the waste to a new section of the landfill. Chrin cleaned up the spill and concluded a post-spill analysis in 2017, court records say. A new liner was installed by 2019, records say.



A trackhoe removes garbage on July 19, 2013, as a cleanup continues from a landslide at the Chrin Brothers Sanitary Landfill in Williams Township Express-Times file photo | Corinne Heft

The Chrin family has a high profile in the Lehigh Valley. Records in a [federal lawsuit](#) unrelated to the landfill dispute say brothers Charles and Nicholas Chrin founded their waste hauling business in 1955. They gradually added the landfill and an excavating business.

When Charles Chrin died in 2018 his estate was valued at \$50 million, federal [court records say](#). The family has companies with offices in Palmer Township and Delaware. They have more than 100 employees and boast annual revenues of tens of millions of dollars, [court records say](#).

A dispute over the estate was [settled this year](#), with portions divvied out to Charles Chrin's sons Dennis and Greg, and his widow, Janet Corriere Chrin, according to attorney Karl Prior. Charles' third son, James Chrin, continues to dispute his share of the inheritance.

A brothers-against-brother federal lawsuit is pending. Chrin companies in which Greg and Dennis have ownership stakes are suing James Chrin, claiming he's stealing waste disposal business from them. James Chrin filed court papers denying the allegations.

The Chrin landfill trial was expected to last three to four weeks. Chrin had a list of 17 witnesses, two key expert reports and more than 700 exhibits it planned to introduce in the landfill trial. Civil & Environmental Consultants had a list of about 30 witnesses and more than 300 exhibits to introduce. The initial landslide lawsuit was filed in 2014.



Chrin Brothers Sanitary Landfill in Williams Township as seen from Downtown Easton on Sept. 15, 2021. Rudy Miller | For lehighvalleylive.com
