Food Allergies Fatality File

A 33-year-old man with tree nut allergies has died in a rare case of anaphylaxis related to sandblasting with walnut shells at an Edmonton fire station that is under renovation. On Oct. 2, David Mathews says his son, Justin Mathews, arrived at the Rossdale fire station construction site to conduct air quality testing, since another company had been in the station sandblasting old lead paint off the walls. Justin was in the building for about 20 minutes before he had difficulty breathing, and collapsed outside. “He walked out of the building, he was trying to get air,” his father told Allergic Living. At the University of Alberta Hospital, doctors told Mathews and his wife that Justin had suffered cardiac arrest during a severe anaphylactic reaction from his walnut exposure. The family suspects Justin inhaled a lot of walnut particles from the blasting, and Alberta Occupational Health and Safety investigators are now investigating. Justin didn’t have an epinephrine auto-injector with him and neither did the first responders at Rossdale fire station. They performed CPR until the ambulance arrived and took the young man to the hospital. Doctors told the family that Justin wouldn’t recover because of brain damage; he was taken off life support on Oct. 7.