



Alberta family mourns Mexico blast victim

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Last Updated: November 15, 2010 8:55pm



Darlene Ferguson, 51, of Ardrossan, Alberta, died from her injuries in hospital after the Sunday morning explosion at the Grand Riviera Princess Hotel. (Handout)

EDMONTON -- An Edmonton-area family is mourning the loss of a 51-year-old grandmother who died in a gas explosion that rocked the resort in Playa del Carmen, Mexico.

But they are grateful her two-year-old grandson, Conner Ferguson, whom she was pushing in a stroller at the time of the blast, is on the mend and out of a Mexican hospital.

Barry Hoffman says his sister, Ardrossan, Alta., resident Darlene Ferguson, died from her injuries in hospital after the Sunday morning explosion at the Grand Riviera Princess Hotel.

She was there for her son's wedding along with about 20 other family members.

Hoffman is now frantically trying to get everyone back home, as early as Tuesday.

"We are hoping they will come home Tuesday, but if they don't, we are hoping they will be coming home on Wednesday," said Hoffman.

"Right now, all we are trying to do is get everyone back home."

Hoffman says Ferguson, a lab technician, was walking with her grandson, about 20 feet away from the blast site.

Ferguson suffered a collapsed lung and internal injuries. Hoffman says she needed surgery, but died in hospital.

The family is also coping with having to arrange her funeral and transportation of her remains home.

"We're all in shock right now," said Hoffman.

Little Conner appears to be doing well, despite all he's been through, said Hoffman.

Ferguson leaves behind a husband, three children and one grandchild.

"She was a very positive and vibrant lady," said Hoffman. "She was always a very happy person and she was always positive about life."

"She was a wonderful person to be around."

Hoffman said his stranded family members stayed in Cancun Monday night and "the entire resort was empty."

A central Alberta family was also celebrating a wedding when the blast rocked the resort.

Cheryl Harris of Red Deer, Alta., says her daughter, Stephanie, was part of the wedding party.

"She told me that there had been an explosion at the resort and that building had collapsed," said Harris about her daughter, who studies at the University of Alberta.

"Her and the group they were with are safe."

Five Canadians were killed in the blast.