

Case Brief

Crim law, homicide, felony murder rule

Hughes, 2/21/15

Identity of Case

People v. James, 74 Cal. Rptr.2d 7 (1998).

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Summary of Facts/Procedural History

Defendant James was cooking meth in her trailer home when it exploded, killing two of her children. Convicted of first degree murder under the felony murder rule. Appeals, in Cal. Felony murder is limited to inherently dangerous felonies.

Statement of the Issue

Is manufacturing meth inherently dangerous so as to apply the felony murder rule?

Holding

Even under the best conditions, cooking meth is inherently dangerous.

Reasoning

California looks at the crime and not the particular circumstances to determine whether a felony is inherently dangerous (because every time someone dies obviously it was dangerous, this is a more neutral way to look at it).

Even following the best possible safety precautions, meth is liable to explode.

In spite of their claim to be neutral, court examines at length the fact that defendant made meth in the worst, most dangerous way possible.

Evaluation