

NEWS

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LOS ANGELES COUNTY HIT WITH \$10.9 MILLION JURY VERDICT

August 24, 2017

LOS ANGELES – A California state court jury hit the County of Los Angeles with a \$10.9 million verdict on Thursday(8/24) in a lawsuit filed by a man who suffered severe injuries when a county employee ran over his legs with a forklift.

The jury deliberated for most of a day in a trial that began on August 10. They found the county liable for the injuries of James Cobb, who was 34 when the accident occurred in 2015 on the grounds of County USC Hospital.

The award is more than double the county's highest settlement offer, according to Cobb's lead trial attorney, Steve Vartazarian.

"The county offered to settle the case for \$5 million during jury deliberations after initially making a \$1.5 million settlement offer before the trial began," Vartazarian said.

The county rejected an earlier settlement demand of \$3 million, according to Vartazarian, in addition to a mid-trial offer to implement a so-called "high/low agreement" that would set a floor and cap on potential damages, even if the jury agreed to award a higher or lower amount.

During the trial, County attorneys argued Cobb could have avoided the forklift if he'd paid better attention while walking through the crosswalk where the collision occurred.

At the time of the accident, Cobb, an employee of a local party rental company, was working on the grounds of County USC Hospital to oversee a tent installation for two events happening on the USC Medical School campus.

While walking through a crosswalk after parking his car, Cobb was struck from behind by a forklift driven by hospital employee John Hill, who allegedly failed to yield to Cobb and did not honk his horn to alert Cobb of his approach.

The impact caused Cobb to fall forward, and the forklift then ran over both of his legs.

Cobb's injuries required extensive surgery and ongoing rehabilitative treatment.

Cobb is represented by Steve Vartazarian of the Vartazarian Law Firm and Bill Daniels of Daniels Law. Both firms are located in Sherman Oaks, CA.

LA County is represented by Tomas Guterres and Vanessa Evangelista of Collins Collins Muir + Stewart LLP.

The case is James Cobb v. County of Los Angeles, case number BC582690 in the Superior Court of California for the County of Los Angeles.

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