

THE DAILY ADVERTISER

Wednesday, April 11, 2007

theadvertiser.com

50 cents ★

\$31.8M awarded in Basin crash

July 2003 wreck killed 5

Amanda McElfresh

amcelfresh@theadvertiser.com

A federal jury on Tuesday awarded nearly \$32 million in damages to the victims of a July 2003 crash on Interstate 10.

The crash happened over the Atchafalaya Basin near mile marker 123 when Wladyslaw Gorski, 48, the driver of an Allied Van Lines truck, failed to slow down for traffic stalled because of a minor crash a few miles ahead.

The 18-wheeler Gorski was driving struck 10 other vehi-

cles before coming to a stop on the bridge. Five people were killed in the crash, including Gorski, Jennifer Garza, 9; Cindy Guerra, 18; Carla Dunn, 27; and Melissa Dunn, 22.

Two other people, Lisa Guerra and Joe Alfaro, both 20 at the time, sustained serious burns when their vehicle caught fire and were treated for several months at Baton Rouge General Medical Center.

Guadalupe and Amelia Guerra, the parents of Cindy and Lisa Guerra, along with Jennifer Garza's parents and

Alfaro, filed suit against Allied Van Lines and Sorenson Moving and Storage Company Inc., alleging that Gorski was negligent in his handling of the vehicle and that Allied was negligent in the screening, hiring, training and supervision of the driver.

The lawsuit sought unspecified damages for physical pain and mental anguish, lost earnings, physical impairment and medical expenses.

"The families are very gratified by the jury verdict and relieved that they will be able to provide for the medical attention that Joe Alfaro and Lisa Guerra will need in the future," said Richard Mithoff,

the Houston attorney who represented the family, in a statement. "This was a terrible accident, which has devastated these families."

The jury awarded \$13.2 million to Alfaro, \$9.1 million to Lisa Guerra, \$6.25 million to Guadalupe and Amelia Guerra and \$3.25 million to Garza's parents, Rene and Patricia Garza, for a total award of \$31.8 million.

Representatives for Allied Van Lines could not be reached for comment.

TALK BACK

Do you think the \$31.8 million award was appropriate? Go to "Forums" at theadvertiser.com.

@the
advertiser
.com