

Baltimore firm nets \$4.85M verdict in Virginia products liability case

By: Heather Cobun Daily Record Legal Affairs Writer July 12, 2019

A Baltimore law firm obtained a \$4.85 million products liability verdict in federal court in Virginia Thursday, potentially the largest ever against a national manufacturer of garage doors.

Attorney Andrew G. Slutkin said jurors deliberated for around four and a half hours before returning the verdict against Overhead Door Corporation, a Texas-based company.

Evangelos Sardis died June 20, 2016 after sustaining a head injury on June 6 while working for Washington Overhead Door Inc. at a construction site in Herndon, Virginia, according to the complaint, filed in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Richmond division.

Sardis and his coworkers were installing fire door hoods on several doors at the site when he fell from a forklift that was lifting a crate and struck his head on pavement, according to the complaint. He had used a gap in the boards of the crate they were unloading as a handhold and the board broke loose.

After the incident, Overhead Door began affixing labels warning against pulling on the horizontal slats, according to the complaint, and it is believed that Sardis was not the first to have one come loose when using it as a handle.

Jurors found negligent design, negligent failure to warn and breach of warranty on the part of Overhead Door, which manufactured the crate. They awarded \$3.4 million to Sardis' wife, Andrea Sardis, \$1 million to their son, Terry-Michael Sardis, and \$348,200 for medical expenses.

"It is our understanding that this is the largest verdict ever against Overhead Door," Slutkin, of Silverman Thompson Slutkin & White said Friday.



Andrew Slutkin with Silverman Thompson Slutkin & White. The firm obtained a \$4.85 million verdict in federal court in Virginia.



The verdict will not be subject to a cap on damages, according to attorney Ethan S. Nochumowitz, also of Silverman Thompson.

Slutkin said the verdict is also among the largest products liability verdicts to come out of the Eastern District of Virginia. His firm tried the case with Peter C. Grenier of Grenier Law Group PLLC in Washington.

The case was filed in federal court as a diversity action but used Virginia state law, according to Slutkin. Overhead Door argued contributory negligence by Sardis but the jury rejected their argument, according to the verdict sheet.

Slutkin said Andrea Sardis is happy to have money to support her son as a single parent but called the verdict "bittersweet."

"She lost her husband and her best friend and the father to her four-month-old baby," he said.

Martin A. Conn, of Moran Reeves & Conn PC in Richmond, represented Overhead Door. He was not immediately available for comment Friday.

The case is *Andrea Sardis v. Overhead Door Corporation*, 3:17-cv-00818.

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