

# Herald-Review

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## Site workers awarded nearly \$2 million in BPC injury case

### Company wants new trial

**By Beth Bily**  
Herald-Review Editor  
Seven years after it happened,  
two electricians who were

injured at Blandin Paper Company have been awarded nearly \$2 million.

After three days of trial and

five hours of deliberation, an Itasca County jury found Blandin Paper Company to be 100 percent at fault for the electricians' injuries and that the injuries were a direct result of an accident which occurred while the two were working at the paper

company.

UPM officials say they will seek a new trial in the case.

The incident which led to the case happened on Sept. 10, 1997. Gary Corradi of Jacobson and Scott Johnson of Chisholm were doing electrical work for Blandin

Paper Company. At the same time, read court documents, the company was cleaning one of its paper machines with a chemical spray which contained NALCO 7577 Alkaline Boilout. Both Cor-

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radi and Johnson were sprayed with the chemical.

The plaintiffs filed suit claiming that Blandin Paper Company "negligently sprayed plaintiffs Gary Corradi and Scott Johnson with the chemical, failed to coordinate the work on the project, failed to warn of the dangers involved in the use of the spray, maintained its premises in an unsafe condition, failed to give adequate instructions and plans, failed to provide adequate safety equipment, continued to spray in the area where the plaintiffs were known to be working and were otherwise negligent."

Their attorney, Edward Matonich of Hibbing, said that his clients suffered significant injuries as a result of the spraying. Johnson suffers from respiratory problems. Corradi had damage to an eye which necessitated a cornea transplant in 1999.

Johnson was awarded \$930,296.12: \$25,000 for past pain, disability and emotional distress; \$161,902 for past wage loss; \$9,872.62 for past health care expense; \$35,000 for future pain, disability and emotional distress; \$647,607 for future lost

earning capacity and \$50,914.50 future health care expenses.

Corradi was awarded \$1,018,733.38: \$25,000 for past pain, disability and emotional distress; \$135,984 for past wage loss; \$18,359.95 for past health care expense; \$35,000 for future pain, disability and emotional distress; \$700,000 in lost future earning capacity and \$104,389.43 in future health care expense.

Although the incident happened in 1997, Matonich said it took some time to make its way to court because of the uncertainty of his clients' injuries.

"You've got the issue of stabilization of the injuries (in cases like these)," said Matonich. "These upper respiratory injuries are ill-defined. It can take years to find out if the injuries are permanent."

Matonich said he was satisfied with the jury's verdict, adding that the length of the their deliberation indicated they did not just "fill in the blanks," but gave the matter thoughtful consideration.

"They were fair and reasonable," said Matonich. (The award) could have been higher,

but I respect the jury's findings. I think the verdict reflects the conscience of the community."

Grand Rapids Attorney Leif Nelson represented Blandin Paper Company in court. His only comment was that the jury's findings were not backed up with what was presented in court.

"It's our belief that the verdict is not supported by the evidence," said Nelson.

UPM, the parent company of Blandin Paper Company, indicated they intend to seek a new trial.

"We will be filing a motion to seek a new trial on this matter because we strongly feel the verdict was unreasonable and not supported by the evidence," said Spokesperson Rebecca Thiem. "We believe that position is supported by the fact that one of the plaintiff's received a workers' compensation payment related to this incident of less than \$200. (We don't know if the other plaintiff filed a claim or received any compensation.) In addition, OSHA did not conduct an investigation of the incident at Blandin."