

Woman receives \$6.75 million In truck-car crash settlement

By Randy Furst

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A trucking company agreed Wednesday to pay a Cushing, Minn., woman \$6.75 million for injuries in a 1994 crash that made her a quadriplegic.

Reata Waldoch, 38, was driving on Hwy. 10 in Cushing about 8 miles north of Little Falls on Oct. 25, 1994, when her car was hit from behind by a semitrailer truck owned by Jevic Transportation Inc., according to Waldoch's attorney, Jim Lord of Chanhassen.

Lord said the truck crushed the rear of Waldoch's car to just behind the driver's seat. He said the evidence showed that at the time of the accident Messer had not had the minimum rest required by federal trucking regulations, had kept inaccurate log books and was speeding and driving too closely.

Ted Sullivan, attorney for Jevic Transportation, disputed Lord's conclusions. "He had a log book. It passed review, and he was not tired." But Sullivan said the case was a tragedy and that "juries tend to disregard liability facts when they feel compassionate and want to compensate someone."

The suit continues against a second defendant, Raymond Cossette Trucking Co., according to Lord and his co-counsel, Ed Matonich of Hibbing.

Lord and Matonich allege that a Cossette truck was following Waldoch's car too closely in the right lane at an excessive rate of speed. Lord said that Horstmann saw Waldoch's car at the last minute "and veered over into the left lane of the highway. The second truck followed way too close, didn't have a chance to react and slammed into the back of my client's car, rendering her a quadriplegic."

Said Lindsay Arthur, attorney for Cossette Trucking: "My client did what he was supposed to do. He switched lanes and avoided impact with the other vehicle, the plaintiff." Arthur said Waldoch's car was partly disabled and driving "at a very slow speed" without flashers.