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Federal jury awards \$11 million for truck accident

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A federal jury has returned an \$11 million verdict against a trucking company and a trucker involved in a 2002 crash that killed a Zion 18-year-old.

Jurors gave the award to the family of Alberto Davila Jr. who was killed on Aug. 24, 2002, when a USF Holland truck driven by Thomas C. Klatt Sr. slammed into his Honda Civic. The accident occurred as Davila was driving two friends home at about 4:30 a.m. on Route 41 in unincorporated Lake County.

Plaintiff's attorneys Robert S. Baizer and Joseph E. Kolar, of Baizer & Kolar, P.C. in Highland Park, brought the suit on behalf of Davila's family.

The case, *Davila v USF Holland et al.*, U.S. 02 C 7021, was heard in U.S. District Judge Blanche M. Manning's courtroom. Jurors returned the verdict Monday after a two-week trial, Baizer said.

Davila's family had originally sued Klatt and USF Holland in Lake County Circuit Court, Baizer said.

However, the defense sought to have the case transferred to federal court because USF Holland is an out-of-state corporation based in Michigan and Klatt is a Wisconsin resident, said Marshall M. Seeder, a partner in Sachnoff & Weaver Ltd., who helped defend Klatt and USF

Accident

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Holland.

Davila and his two friends were on their way home to Zion from a Denny's restaurant at the Gurnee Mills shopping mall when Klatt rear-ended Davila's car, Baizer said.

A "black box" in Klatt's truck showed that he was traveling at 57 mph and did not touch his brakes before the accident, Baizer said.

The defense claimed that Davila was solely responsible for the crash and his death because he ran a red light, Seeder said.

One of Davila's passengers was injured in the crash but has already set-

tled his suit, Baizer said.

Besides Seeder, Klatt and USF Holland were also defended by Sachnoff & Weaver partner Jose A. Isasi II and associate Kendra C. Shearer.

USF Holland and Klatt are "considering" an appeal, Seeder said.

Baizer said Davila's family had demanded \$2.5 million before trial and the fact that the jurors only deliberated for one hour before returning the verdict "maybe made a statement to USF Holland."

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