

## Jury increases award to injured forklift operator

Philadelphia, PA, United States  
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A jury has increased an award to forklift operator Leroy Rice, now a partial paraplegic following an industrial incident in a Philadelphia frozen food warehouse.

After an appeal, a second jury trial on Interlake Material Handling Inc's cross-complaints against four other defendants on February 23 found in Rice's favour, increasing his award to USD12.4 million. Interlake disputed Rice's damages from the initial 2006 trial but, in February, did not present testimony of witnesses who were not allowed to testify during the first jury trial in Philadelphia Common Pleas Court.

"They can appeal again," says plaintiff attorney Thomas J Duffy, of the Philadelphia law firm Duffy + Partners, which represented Rice. Payment of the awards awaits conclusion of all legal moves.

Lawyers for Interlake withheld comment.

Now, five defendants owe USD15.78 million to Rice in awards and settlements.

Rice was operating a forklift that got stuck, bumped into Interlake-manufactured storage shelving racks and bent a rack support leg. The 22-year-old shelving collapsed and thousands of pounds of frozen food fell on Rice, then 37 years old, on September 18, 2001.

In 2006, a 12-member jury had unanimously awarded USD10.6 million to Rice. The second jury has increased the award.

Before the first trial, Rice's attorneys reached settlements with his former employer, warehouse operator 2701 Red Lion Road Associates, for USD2.1 million; storage rack installer Walter A Schmidt Inc for USD350,000; and rack servicing firms Warehouse Technologies for USD525,000 and Curti Services for USD350,000.

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