

The Tennessee Jury Verdict Reporter

The Most Current and Complete Summary of Tennessee Jury Verdicts

September, 2005

Statewide Jury Verdict Coverage

2 TJVR 9

Unbiased and Independently Researched Jury Verdict Results

In This Issue

Davidson County

Auto Negligence - Defense verdict	p. 2
Uninsured Motorist - \$19,986	p. 7
Assault - \$27,937	p. 8
Government Liability - Zero	p. 11

Federal Court - Winchester

Neg. Bus Security - \$8,000,000	p. 1
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Knox County

Medical Negligence - Defense verdict	p. 2
Truck Negligence - \$14,000	p. 3
Auto Negligence - \$5,007	p. 5
Defamation - Defense verdict	p. 7

Federal Court - Nashville

Negligence - \$3,174,627	p. 3
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Shelby County

Auto Negligence - Defense verdict	p. 3
Auto Negligence - Mixed verdict	p. 7

Wilson County

Auto Negligence - \$15,000	p. 4
Auto Negligence - Defense verdict	p. 11

Federal Court - Memphis

Medical Negligence - Defense verdict	p. 4
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Union County

Auto Negligence - \$40,000	p. 5
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Scott County

Premises Liability - \$180,000	p. 5
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Perry County

Negligent Entrustment - \$13,700	p. 5
----------------------------------	------

Federal Court - Knoxville

Disability Discrim - Defense verdict	p. 6
--------------------------------------	------

Obion County

Employment Retaliation - \$57,321	p. 6
Auto Negligence - Defense verdict	p. 10

Claiborne County

Auto Negligence - \$26,770	p. 6
Medical Negligence - Defense verdict	p. 9

Lewis County

Auto Negligence - \$4,571	p. 8
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Henderson County

Auto Negligence - \$10,000	p. 8
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Rutherford County

Medical Negligence - Defense verdict	p. 8
--------------------------------------	------

Hawkins County

Auto Negligence - Defense verdict	p. 9
-----------------------------------	------

Campbell County

Auto Negligence - Defense verdict	p. 10
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Cumberland County

Premises Liability - Defense verdict	p. 10
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Henry County

Auto Negligence - \$3,500	p. 11
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Civil Jury Verdicts

Timely coverage of civil jury verdicts in Tennessee including court, division, presiding judge, parties, case number, attorneys and results.

Negligent Bus Security - Plaintiff was left a paraplegic when a Greyhound bus overturned after a psychotic passenger attacked the driver

Surles v. Greyhound Lines, 4:01-107
Plaintiff: Phillip F. Cossich and Walter L. LeBlanc, *Cossich Sumich & Parsiolo*, Belle Chasse, LA, Jodi J. Aamodt, *Jacobs Manuel & Kain*, New Orleans, LA and Andrew L. Berke and Marvin B. Berke, *Berke Berke & Berke*, Chattanooga, TN
Defense: Frederick N. Sager, Jr., Mark R. Johnson, Richard H. Hill, II and Thomas Allen, *Weinberg Wheeler Hudgens Gunn & Dial*, Atlanta, GA
Verdict: \$8,000,000 for plaintiff
Federal: **Winchester**
Judge: H. Bruce Guyton
8-10-05

On 10-3-01 and just in the wake of the September 11th attacks, a Greyhound bus drove in the middle of the night through Tennessee on I-24 near Manchester. The bus originated in Chicago and was headed to Orlando. It was piloted by Garfield Sands.

As the bus moved through Kentucky, a passenger behaved oddly. He walked up and down the aisles and made menacing remarks. It turns out this passenger was a Croatian immigrant named Damir Igric. Igric, a former policeman in Croatia, had a long history of mental problems. Also on the bus was Sharon Surles, age 56 and of

Saginaw, MI. She was seated in the fourth row.

Suddenly Igric attacked Sands with a box-cutter -- Igric cut the driver's throat and grabbed the steering wheel. Sands fought as well as he could. The bus still went into the median. It became airborne and landed on its side. [Igric died in the crash.] So did seven other passengers -- many more were injured.

Surles, asleep at the time, was badly hurt in the crash when ejected from the bus -- she sustained a disc fracture at T1-T2. The injury has left her permanently paralyzed from her neck down. She also had broken ribs, a serious leg injury as well as head trauma. Surles's only memory of the crash was the bus rolling -- despite her medications, Surles continues to report daily pain. Her medicals to date have totaled \$1.6 million.

In this lawsuit, she targeted Greyhound and its absent security on the bus. She noted that the bus lacked any security -- there was no protective barrier between the driver and passengers, nor did Sands have a cell phone or communication device to indicate there was a problem.

Nor was Sands warned about the risk of an attack. Surles thought this amounted to more than just ordinary negligence -- it was gross negligence, the company having a history of thousands of incidents of violence. There were also sixty-one reports of passengers interfering with the driver. Despite this history, Surles argued, Greyhound did nothing to secure its buses.

A security expert from the LAPD, Robert Martin, noted Greyhound lacked any threat assessment protocol. A safety expert, Lance Wolf, opined that