

The Indiana Jury Verdict Reporter

The Most Current and Complete Summary of Indiana Jury Verdicts

October 2026

Statewide Jury Verdict Coverage

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Unbiased and Independently Researched Jury Verdict Results

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Wrongful Death - The estate of a prison inmate claimed prison officials failed to protect him from a dangerous cellmate despite warnings that he needed to be moved; defendants maintained the inmate refused protective custody and died from a fentanyl overdose rather than an assault

Estate of Williams v. Wells, et al.,
49D12-2301-PL-3597

Plaintiff: Eric S. Pavlack and Colin E. Flora, *Pavlack Law, LLC*, Indianapolis

Defense: Adam J. Strahan and Joshua P. Farrow, *Lewis & Wilkins, LLP*, Indianapolis

Verdict: \$7,000,000 for plaintiff against individual defendants jointly and severally (comprised of \$4,500,000 compensatory damages and \$2,500,000 punitive) on constitutional claims; defense verdict for Indiana Department of Correction on negligence claim
County: **Marion**, Superior Judge: Patrick J. Dietrick, 10-1-26

In August of 2012, Kevin Williams was convicted of murder and sentenced to 44 years in prison. In July of 2022, Williams, then age 33, was incarcerated at the Miami Correctional Facility. Williams shared a cell in the facility's L Unit with Thomas King.

King was described as an athletic man who was substantially larger than Williams, had a reputation for violence toward other inmates, and had experienced problems with a previous cellmate. King has a menacing tattoo on his chest that

says "Monster" in stylized script. L Unit itself housed inmates considered aggressive and experienced more violence than other units.

By 7-14-22, Williams wanted to be moved. At about lunchtime, Department of Correction employee Lt. Nicole Wells was distributing meals when Williams told her that he was not compatible with his cellmate.

According to Wells's incident report, she told Williams she would look into the matter. Williams's mother, Anita Dunigan, also repeatedly contacted the prison concerning her son's situation. Wells eventually directed Correctional Officer Angel Goodridge to arrange a bed move for Williams. Goodridge declined to move him without the appropriate paperwork, and Lt. Anthony Luckey agreed that paperwork was required. Wells left the prison that day without Williams having been moved.

The parties sharply disputed what happened next. According to defendants, Luckey directed Sgt. Preston Clark to offer Williams protective custody. According to Clark, he and another officer went to Williams's cell and presented the necessary forms, but Williams refused protective custody and would not complete the paperwork.

The Estate disputed that the encounter ever occurred. It pointed out that no signed refusal or required log entry documenting a refusal had been produced, that Clark could not identify the officer who supposedly accompanied him, and that Clark's

Civil Jury Verdicts

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

Historical Jury Verdicts

Workplace Negligence - The plaintiff suffered a severe crush injury to his leg in a workplace incident in 1976, and after losing at a 1981 jury trial (reversed at the Supreme Court), the case was tried again in 1987 – at the second trial the plaintiff took a verdict of \$2.7 million which was subsequently upheld on appeal

Chaffee v. Georgetown Steel,

Plaintiff: Robert Gonderman, Sr. and Robert Gonderman, Jr., South Bend
 Defense: R. Kent Rowe and Edmond Foley, *Rowe & Laderer*, South Bend
 Verdict: \$2,700,000 for plaintiff
 County: **St. Joseph**
 Date: 6-25-87

Lee Chaffee, then age 29, was an experienced forklift operator. He was working on July 7, 1976 for the old American Chain and Cable facility in South Bend. This day he was unloading a truck trailer that contained heavy (4,000 pound) steel coils. The trailer had been delivered by Georgetown Steel. Chaffee was operating a forklift manufactured by Clark Equipment inside the trailer

As Chaffee was unloading the trailer, he failed to appreciate it had holes in it. The forklift crashed through a hole and in the process Chaffee suffered a severe crush injury to his leg. He later underwent eight operations.

Chaffee sued Georgetown Steel (he alleged negligence regarding the condition of the trailer) as well as a products liability claim against Clark Equipment. The case first came to trial in 1981 against both Georgetown Steel and Clark Equipment. The defendants prevailed.

Chaffee took an appeal. The Indiana Court of Appeals affirmed in

1985. The Supreme Court accepted transfer. It affirmed the verdict as to Clark Equipment. The high court reversed on an instruction error as to Georgetown Steel. A new trial was ordered. *See Chaffee v. Clark Equipment*, 494 N.E.2d 84 (Ind. 1986).

The second trial was conducted in June of 1987. The jury found Georgetown Steel solely at fault. Chaffee took \$2.45 million in compensatory damages, his wife taking \$245,000 more for her consortium interest. The verdict totaled \$2.7 million. That would be about \$8.2 million in 2026 dollars. Georgetown Steel appealed. The Indiana Court of Appeals affirmed a year later. *See Georgetown Steel v. Chaffee*, 519 N.E.2d 574 (Ind. Ct. App. 1988). The case was finally over 12 years after the original injury event and included two trials, three appellate opinions

About Jury Verdict Publications

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