

The Mississippi Jury Verdict Reporter

The Most Current and Complete Summary of Mississippi Jury Verdicts

August 2026

Statewide Jury Verdict Coverage

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Auto Negligence - The plaintiff was in a domestic dispute (or perhaps not) with her long-term boyfriend as he was preparing to drive out of town for a job in his company provided van – she didn't want him to leave and held onto the van's window to encourage him to stay – he accelerated and she suffered very serious injuries when he ran her over – in this lawsuit she sought damages from him and further alleged a vicarious liability theory against his employer – the jury awarded substantial damages and returned a clear quotient verdict on comparative fault, assessing it 64.2% to the boyfriend and 35.8% to the plaintiff

Clewis v. Jerrolds et al, 25-309

Plaintiff: Dennis C. Sweet, III, *Sweet & Associates*, Jackson and Robyn K.

Teague, *Teague & Associates*, Jackson

Defense: H. Wesley Williams, III,

Markow Walker, Ridgeland for

Jerrolds (tortfeasor)

Paul P. Blake, *McAngus Goudelock &*

Courie, Ridgeland and S. Malcolm O.

Harrison, Jackson for Wachter

(tortfeasor's employer)

Verdict: \$3,634,485 for plaintiff less 35.8% comparative fault and a finding for plaintiff on vicarious liability

Court: **Hinds**

Judge: Adrienne Wooten

Date: 8-3-26

Jennifer Clewis, then age 50, described she had a long and tumultuous relationship with her live-in boyfriend, Jonathan Jerrolds. She recalled he had beaten her many

times. On the evening of 1-30-25, Jerrolds was preparing for an out-of-town business trip from Jackson to Tuscaloosa. His employer was the electrical contractor, Wachter. Wachter provided Jerrolds a van and trailer. It was his plan to drive to Tuscaloosa that evening in the van (and using the company credit card) to rent a hotel room in advance of the next day's work.

Clewis and Jerrolds had been fighting this night. She'd explain the source of the trouble was that he was cheating again. As he got into his van to drive away (this was Manship Street at Kenwood Place in the Belhaven area of Jackson), Clewis objected. She wanted him to stay. Clewis put her hands on the window (it was partially open) and implored him to stay. He rudely suggested she let go.

Jerrolds began to drive away. Clewis was still hanging on. She remembered he was going faster and faster. Clewis finally let go. She fell under the van and it ran her over. Jerrolds heard the "thud" of the impact and stopped. It is not exactly clear what happened but Clewis later stated Jerrolds ran over her twice more, reversing the vehicle and driving forward again. At this juncture he had appreciated that Clewis was injured. Jerrolds scooped her up and drove her to UMMC.

Clewis suffered very serious injuries. She had multiple fractures including to her pelvis (open book), hip and femur (an L-5 transverse fracture too) as well as internal injuries to her organs. She was in a

Notable Louisiana Verdict

Helicopter Negligence - A contractor being transported on a helicopter from an offshore rig suffered serious injuries when the helicopter crashed after the operator suffered a medical event and became incapacitated – the theory was that 15 minutes before the incapacitation, the pilot had briefly blacked out and at that time the pilot should have aborted the flight or returned to the platform

Romero v. Westwind Helicopters,
6:23-442

Plaintiff: Mark Steven Owens,
Owens Law, Lafayette and C. Michael
Hill, Lafayette, LA

Defense: M. Ross Cunningham and
F. David Denny, *Cunningham Swaim*,
Dallas, TX

Verdict: Defense verdict on liability

Federal: **Lafayette, Louisiana**

Judge: S. Maurice Hicks

Date: 7-31-26

Robert Romero was working in telecom services for Tampnet US on 10-26-22. He'd been doing work on an offshore platform (Ship Shoal 349) in the Gulf of Mexico. His work was done and he was returning to land. Romero was to be transported back on a Bell 407 helicopter operated by Westwind Helicopters. The pilot was James Bullock.

The helicopter took off without incident in the afternoon. Romero was in the front seat of the helicopter to the right of the pilot. Another worker was in the back seat. A few minutes into the flight, Bullock reported to Romero that he had just blacked out. This was alarming to Romero as Bullock was the only helicopter pilot aboard. Romero implored Bullock to return to the

platform, land at another platform or even to land in the sea. Bullock continued the journey – the helicopter was flying 1,500 feet above the sea.

Fifteen minutes later Bullock said his last words. They were, "I'm overheating. I'm not going to make it." He then slumped over. Romero tried to manipulate the controls on the helicopter. That was of little help. The helicopter descended rapidly from 1,500 feet in 19 seconds before striking the water hard. The helicopter then flipped over. It had floats on it and remained buoyant.

Romero and the passenger were able to get out of the helicopter. They could not rescue Bullock. He drowned in the helicopter. The two survivors were now just adrift on the floating wreckage. Westwind Helicopters back on land wasn't monitoring the flight nor had it been in communication with Bullock. When the helicopter didn't show at the Westwind base in Abbeville, LA, Westwind called the Coast Guard. Another hour later the Coast Guard rescued the two men and recovered Bullock's body. The helicopter was lost at sea.

Romero suffered serious injuries in the helicopter crash and upon his rescue, he was flown by helicopter to a hospital in New Orleans. His injuries including a mild TBI, L1-3 fractures, a bruised lung, facial fractures and a broken femur.

Romero sued Westwind (it is a Starr Indemnity insured) and alleged negligence by Bullock in continuing the flight after he had first blacked out. His aviation expert was David Downey, Southlake, TX. Romero developed his damages with a triumvirate of experts, Denis Boudreaux, Economist, Ted

Deshotels, Vocational and Shelly Savant, Life Care Plan.

The case was originally filed in Iberia Parish. The theory that advanced to trial was state law negligence by Bullock in operating the helicopter. A cardiologist expert, Dr. Ankur Lodha, Lafayette, explained that Bullock had not sustained a sudden cardiac event (he wasn't sure what caused the incapacitation but it wasn't that), and that Bullock had time to react before the incapacitation. If Bullock prevailed he sought general damages in two categories (past and future) as well as lost wages, future lost wages and future medical bills.

Romero made claims that were predicated on federal law and Westwind removed the case to federal court. Those claims did not survive to trial as they were subsumed by federal preemption. They included claims against Westwind for negligence in its emergency planning and a lack of operational control in failing to communicate with Bullock, all of which led to a delayed rescue.

Westwind defended the case and focused on a single theme – Bullock's incapacitation was just a sudden disabling coronary event that could not have been predicted. In fact just two weeks before the crash, Bullock had cleared an FAA physical.

The court's instructions were interesting. Romero was required to separately prove that, (1) Bullock failed to act as a reasonably prudent pilot, (2) this negligence caused Romero's injuries, (3) Romero's injuries were a result of the kind of risk Bullock was expected to prevent, and (4) his damages. Romero's duties were no issue. **Ed. Note** - The third charge (the kind of risk Bullock was

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