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suits & deals

\$795,000 for Fatal Tire Explosion

Burns v. Bridgewater Wholesalers: The family of a retired man who was killed in the explosion of a truck tire accepted \$795,000 on Feb. 26 from four parties.

In March 2000, Francis Burns of Whitehouse Station accompanied his son-in-law, Ken Trethaway of Bethlehem, Pa., to Bridgewater Wholesalers Inc., a trucking firm. Burns was there to watch Trethaway change a tire on an 18-wheeler.

Trethaway failed to rely on a metal cage often used when truck tires are changed to guard against the explosion of worn tires, according to Burns'

attorney, Richard Gantner of Nee, Beecham & Gantner in Hillsborough. The tire blew out, hitting Burns in the face. He died nine days later from a brainstem hemorrhage.

Burns' wife, Clara, sued in Middlesex County, naming Trethaway; his employer, Richie's Tire Service of Middlesex; Bridgewater Wholesalers of Bridgewater, where the accident took place; and Ranger Tires of Farmingdale, N.Y., which had retreaded the tire.

Gantner claimed that Trethaway should have used the cage, that the wholesaler allowed drivers to be slop-

py about maintaining correct tire pressure on rigs and that the retread firm failed to notice weakness in the tire.

The settlement was reached after three days of negotiations before Judge Amy Piro Chambers.

Richie's and Trethaway, represented by partner Nadine Maleski at McElroy Deutsch & Mulvaney in Morristown, paid a total of \$300,000 through Richie's carrier, Harleysville Insurance Co. Maleski declines to comment except to say that the relationship between the plaintiff and defendant was "unfortunate."

Ranger paid \$442,500 and was represented by Frank Yurasko, a solo practitioner in Somerville, who calls the result "fair and reasonable." The carrier was Scottsdale Insurance Co.

Bridgewater Wholesalers paid \$52,500. It was represented by John Burke of Addas, Berlin, Kaplan, Dembling, Burke & Potenza in Morristown, who declines to comment. Reliance Insurance Co. was the carrier.

— By Jim Edwards