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LA Jury Returns Verdict Against Carmaker

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A jury ruled that **DaimlerChrysler** must pay about \$54 million to the family of a longshoreman who was killed by a Dodge truck that backed over him at the Port of Los Angeles, attorneys said Friday.

A Superior Court jury awarded damages to the family of Richard Mraz, 38, of San Pedro, in a negligence and product liability suit.

The panel awarded \$50 million in punitive damages on Wednesday. It awarded \$5.2 million in compensatory damages on March 2, of which DaimlerChrysler (nyse: [DCX - news - people](#)) was to pay about \$4 million.

The company said it is considering an appeal.

Mraz suffered fatal head injuries when he was run over by a 1992 Dodge Dakota at a container terminal on April 13, 2004.

Both sides said he had left the truck running without setting the parking brake, but they differed on who was to blame for the accident.

Attorneys for Mraz's wife and family argued that a defect in the truck's automatic transmission made it appear that it was in the park position when it actually was between gears. They say the truck slipped into reverse after Mraz got out.

They argued that the automaker had received more than 1,000 "park-to-reverse" complaints involving 1988 through 2003 model Dakotas. The company issued a recall in 2000 but it was for repairs that failed to fix the problem, said Charles Naylor, an attorney for the family.

"The recall is phony. It didn't work. There are people out there, lots of them ... their cars will still malfunction," Naylor said Friday.

The jurors found that DaimlerChrysler was negligent in the truck's design and for failing to warn consumers or adequately recall the vehicle, Naylor said.

The suit didn't request a court order requiring DaimlerChrysler to fix the alleged problem because that might impinge on federal regulatory statutes, Naylor added.