

55.2M award in port death

Jury finds DaimlerChrysler negligent in alleged 'park-to-reverse' defect; Richard Mraz, 38, was working at APL on Terminal Island in '04 when a truck struck him.

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By Kristopher Hanson, Staff writer



A jury has levied a \$55.2 million judgement against DaimlerChrysler in the 2004 death of Richard Mraz, shown in December 2003 with his family - from left, Roy Lopez, wife Adriana Mraz, baby Addison Mraz, and Joe Lopez.

SAN PEDRO - The family of a longshoreman who was run over by a Dodge pickup at a container terminal in 2004 has been awarded \$55.2 million by a jury who found the truck mechanically defective.

Richard Mraz, 38, was working at the American Presidents Line facility on Terminal Island when the pickup reversed into him after he had exited it, knocking him to the ground and resulting in a fatal head injury.

Jurors found that a "park-to-reverse" defect in the Dodge Dakota, owned by APL, caused Mraz's death, and that automaker DaimlerChrysler was negligent in design of the vehicle's transmission system.

"DaimlerChrysler made a conscious decision to risk the public safety instead of issuing a proper product recall involving over a million cars," said attorney Charles D. Naylor, a San Pedro-based maritime law attorney who represented Mraz's widow, Adriana, and their three children.

"It's just wrong, and in this case, it resulted in someone being killed."

The award, announced Wednesday in Los Angeles Superior Court following a month-long trial, includes \$5.2 million in compensatory damages and \$50 million in punitive damages.