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**DAIMLERCHRYLSER TO PAY \$55.2 MILLION TO SAN PEDRO FAMILY**

**San Pedro, CA – March 8, 2007** – The Law office of Charles D. Naylor is proud to announce that yesterday afternoon, a Los Angeles Superior Court jury awarded a San Pedro family \$5.2M in compensatory damages and \$50M in punitive damages against DaimlerChrysler Corporation, for the wrongful death of 38-year-old Richard Mraz.

On April 13, 2004, Mraz, a longshoreman, suffered fatal head injuries when the 1992 Dodge Dakota pickup truck he had been driving at a Los Angeles harbor container terminal ran him over after as he exited the vehicle believing it was in park. The jury found that a “park-to-reverse” defect in the Dodge Dakota's automatic transmission caused Mraz's death, that DaimlerChrysler was negligent in the design of the vehicle, negligent for failing to warn of the defect and also for failing to adequately recall or retrofit the vehicle.

The San Pedro native leaves behind his wife, Adrianna, a three-year-old daughter, and two teenage stepsons.

“Richard was a loving husband and father who was just 38-years-old when he died,” said Adriana Mraz. “When I found out many people had been injured by the same defect, and some even killed, I was determined to hold DaimlerChrysler accountable. I am deeply grateful to the members of the jury for their hard work and for sending a strong message to DaimlerChrysler that it must finally fix the defect in millions of its vehicles.”

Charles D. Naylor, a prominent maritime lawyer in San Pedro, Calif., was retained by the Mraz family shortly after the accident. After Naylor's investigation discovered the “park-to-reverse” defect in the Dakota pickup, he joined forces with Lieff Cabraser Heimann & Bernstein, LLP, a San Francisco-based law firm with extensive expertise in vehicle defect litigation.

During the month long trial, Naylor and his co-counsel Scott Nealey and Robert Nelson, argued that the “park-to-reverse” defect in the Dodge Dakota (also present in the Dodge Ram and Jeep Grand Cherokee) allows a driver, such as Mraz, to place the vehicle into what appears to be the park position, when in fact the transmission is between gears.

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The vehicle does not move when the driver removes his foot from the brake; however, the vehicle can have a dangerous delayed engagement of powered reverse after a few seconds or an even longer period.

The evidence presented at trial exposed that DaimlerChrysler had received well over a thousand "park-to-reverse" complaints, including complaints with the 1988 through 2003 Dodge Dakotas, over a period spanning more than a decade before Mraz was killed. Senior management at DaimlerChrysler failed to investigate the full extent of the problem out of fear that it could expose the corporation to liability for injuries that had already occurred, and it would require a massive recall.

"When DaimlerChrysler finally determined that it had to do something about the problem in 2000 due to an ongoing NHTSA investigation, it chose to issue a 'voluntary recall' of the Dodge Dakota in 2000 to install a 'fix' that its safety office knew, and its engineers testified at trial they knew, did not fix the 'park-to-reverse' problem," stated Nealey. "The result is that today there are over a million vehicles, including 1988 to 2003 Dodge Dakota pickup trucks, on the road with the same defect that caused the death of Mr. Mraz."

At trial, plaintiffs introduced into evidence a 1999 memorandum written by Antonius Benders, Senior Manager in the Vehicle Safety Office at DaimlerChrysler. In the memo, Mr. Benders discussed the pros and cons of doing a survey that the National Highway Transportation Safety Agency (NHTSA) sought to determine the cause of the "park-to-reverse" incidents. One of the cons to doing such a survey was that doing so could provide "product liability credence to a hypothesis we have long ignored" and "continually challenge." This "smoking gun" document showed that DaimlerChrysler refused to properly investigate the cause of all the accidents, including deaths, for liability reasons.

"Hopefully, the verdict will cause DaimlerChrysler to change its conduct and save the lives of others," noted Charles D. Naylor. "Working as a team with Lieff Cabraser's expertise on the defect issues and my expertise on the long shore aspects of the case was key to the successful resolution of the lawsuit."

#### **About Law Offices of Charles D. Naylor**

Charles D. Naylor has been practicing maritime personal injury law in the Los Angeles/Long Beach harbor area since 1974 and opened his own private practice, Law Offices of Charles D. Naylor in 1985. A San Pedro High School alum, Naylor received his undergraduate degree from California State University, Long Beach and his law degree from Santa Clara University. Naylor traces his interest in maritime law to his family's involvement in commercial fishing and his own experience working as a longshoreman during his college years. For more information, visit [www.naylorlaw.com](http://www.naylorlaw.com).

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