

\$891,000 Jury Verdict for Psychological Injuries to Bridgewater Man

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A jury awarded a Bridgewater man \$891,000 in connection with an accident in which a United Parcel Service truck crashed into his living room. Craig Hodgkiss was unhurt in the accident, but his lawyer said he suffered from post-traumatic-stress disorder and has to take medicine daily to cope.

A Somerset County jury awarded Hodgkiss \$750,000 in compensation, which, with interest added, will result in an \$891,000 payout from UPS, said Hodgkiss' lawyer from Eichen Crutchlow Zaslow LLP, an Edison trial law firm.

He expects UPS to appeal. Mario Colitti, an attorney who represented UPS in the case, did not return a phone call yesterday seeking comment.

The verdict was handed down Friday after a five-day trial before Superior Court Judge Frank Gasiorowski in Somerville, his attorney said.

The suit stemmed from an Oct. 19, 1998, incident in which a UPS truck jumped a curb near Hodgkiss' home and crashed into the living room of his condominium, his attorney said.

At the time, Hodgkiss' wife was holding the couple's 10-month-old baby in the rear of the unit and witnessed the accident. Hodgkiss, who did not see the crash but heard it, ushered them and a downstairs neighbor to safety, according to his attorney.

The incident, the lawyer said, caused his client permanent psychological damage.

"Many people devalue psychiatric injuries. Under recent New Jersey case law, a psychiatric injury must cause significant sickness and be caused by a significant stimulus to be a viable claim. Both factors were present here."