

Chicago Daily Law Bulletin®

VOLUME 168, NO. 36

LAW BULLETIN MEDIA

Worker settles foot injury case for \$4.8M

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A construction worker who had multiple toes amputated after a job-site accident in Tinley Park received a \$4.8 million settlement.

In January 2018, Joseph Gonzalez, then 46, was working as a laborer for his employer, Schmidt Steel Inc., at a jobsite run by general contractor Morgan/Harbour Construction LLC.

While working, his left foot was crushed by a steel beam that fell after being accidentally lifted by a crane, he alleged.

Gonzalez's foot was fractured in several places. Three toes and part of a fourth were ultimately amputated.

In 2018, he and his wife, Michele, filed a lawsuit in Cook County Circuit Court.

The lawsuit named Morgan/Harbour Construction, LLC, crane operator Jeffrey R. Williams and his company Williams Crane Rental, Inc., a subcontractor on the jobsite.

Other defendants named in the complaint were fellow crane operators Atlas Crane Services, Inc., Kingery Steel Fabricators, Inc. — who were hired to complete steel struc-

tural and support work for the project — and steel manufacturer Vulcraft, a Division of Nucor Corporations.

Schmidt Steel was added as a third-party defendant and contributed to the settlement, which was entered Feb. 16.

The third amended complaint includes counts of construction negligence and loss of consortium and alleged that the defendants failed to properly train, inspect and supervise the safe use of the crane, failed to warn Gonzalez that more than one steel beam could lift and fall while being moved and lifted the cranes when Gonzalez was in the staging area.

Kingery Steel Fabricators and Atlas Crane Services settled out of court prior to the other defendants. Vulcraft obtained summary judgment in 2021, dismissing it from the case.

Philip H. Corboy Jr. of Corboy & Demetrio PC represented the Gonzalezes.

Corboy said that strategy was to demonstrate the ways in which the defendants violated established safety obligations and that there were negotiations regarding the amounts paid by the defendants' insurance companies

before reaching the desired amount.

He said that the money will assist with paying for past and future medical expenses, as well as any expected pain and suffering.

He said Gonzalez is currently working as an inspector for a construction company, where he primarily manages job sites and does not do physical labor.

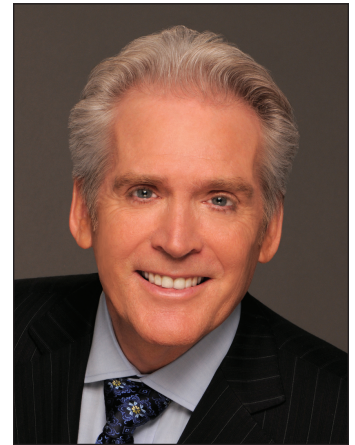
"It was nice that a company was able to find a job that he'd be capable of doing," Corboy said.

Judge Bridget Hughes presided over the case. The settlement was reached Feb. 10

Edward G. Willer and Michelle M. Kohut of Corboy & Demetrio also represented the plaintiffs.

James W. Ford, Meghan A. Gonnissen and Neha Tannan of Ford & Britton PC. represented Morgan/Harbour Construction. They could not be reached for comment.

Thomas J. Lyman, Lew R. C. Bricker, David A. Johnson and David Sethi of SmithAmundsen, LLC represented both Williams and Williams Crane Rental. They could not be reached for comment.



Philip H. Corboy Jr.

Ian J. Fuller and Jennifer L. Kiesewetter of Quintairo, Prieto, Wood & Boyer, P.A. represented Schmidt Steel, Inc. They could not be reached for comment.

Steven B. Fisher of Ripes, Nelson, Baggot & Kalobratsos PC. represented Atlas Crane. He declined to comment.

Adam S. Kreuzer and Adam C. Carter of ESP Kreuzer Cores LLP represented Kingery Steel. Kreuzer declined to comment.

Harry N. Arger of Dykema Gossett PLLC represented Vulcraft. He declined to comment.

The case is *Joseph and Michele Gonzalez v. Morgan Harbour/Construction, et al.*, No. 18 L 4989.