



Automobile Mechanic Severely Burned In Gas Explosion Settles for \$4.7M

An automobile mechanic who was set on fire when a gasoline tank exploded at his work site accepted \$4.7 million on May 24 to settle his federal court product-liability suit, *Mechin v. Carquest Corp.*

On July 3, 2007, Jean Michel Mechin, then 19, was working in a maintenance bay at the Firestone Auto Care Center in Denville. A three-quarters-full gas tank from a Ford van that had been placed on a stand began to teeter. As Mechin ran to steady it, he was splashed with gasoline. The tank then fell on the floor, breaking an incandescent work light that caused the gas to ignite.

According to the suit, Mechin suffered burns over 42 percent of his body, including second- and third-degree burns on his chest, arms, neck and face, and tracheal scarring. He suffers from severe pain, diminished range of neck motion, scars, post-traumatic stress disorder and major depressive disorder, says his lawyer, **David Mazie of Mazie, Slater, Katz**

& Freeman in Roseland.

The suit said the work light was sold by Carquest Corp. of Raleigh, N.C., to auto repair shops even though it is not suitable in settings where flammable liquids and vapors are found. The suit said the light's labeling as "professional grade" was misleading and that its designation as approved by Underwriters Laboratories wrongly suggested it was approved for commercial use.

The suit named Carquest Corp., two of its subsidiaries, Carquest Products Inc. and BWP Distributors, as well as Voltec Industries, TASCO and TMC Enterprises, all of Chino, Calif., related entities that obtained UL certification and supplied the light to Carquest.

Voltec agreed on April 19 to pay \$900,000. On May 24, after a mediation session with Magistrate Judge **Esther Salas**, Carquest, CPI and BWP agreed to pay \$2,050,000, and TASCO and TMC agreed to pay a total of \$1,750,000.



PHOTO BY CARMEN NATALE

LIGHT LABEL ALLEGED TO BE MISLEADING: Plaintiffs' lawyer David Mazie claimed that a work light, which caused an explosion, was erroneously held out to be suitable for commercial use.

Matthew Mendelsohn of Mazie Slater also represented Mechin.

Carquest Corp. was represented by **Mario Colitti** of **Baumann & Viscomi** in Fairfield; Carquest Products and BWP by **Mark Ciarrocca** of **Ciarrocca & Ciarrocca** in Union; and TASCO and TMC by **John Shea** of **Litchfield Cavo** in Cherry Hill. They did not return calls. Voltec's lawyer, **Scott Haworth** of **Haworth Coleman Gerstman** in New York, declines to comment.

— *By Charles Toutant*