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N.J. woman struck by telephone pole to receive \$125M from Verizon

Associated Press



Richard Drew / AP

NEWARK, N.J. — The family of a woman who was paralyzed when she was struck by a falling telephone pole as she waited for a bus is to receive \$125 million to settle a lawsuit against Verizon.

Maria Meister was commuting from Union City to her job in New York in 2017 when the pole snapped, crushing her head and body. She suffered multiple spinal injuries and a severe brain injury and is paralyzed from the chest down, according to the lawsuit.

The suit alleged the pole was 43 years old and had been scheduled to be replaced in 1999 when PSE&G removed its equipment from the pole and directed Verizon to do the same and remove the pole. The suit also claimed Verizon hadn't inspected the pole since 1989.

The settlement order was signed Monday by a state judge in Essex County. In addition to the judgment against Verizon, it orders utility PSEG, which jointly owned the pole, to pay \$250,000.

"Because of their egregious actions, coupled with the catastrophic injuries to Maria, Verizon came to the table and the case settled," said attorney David Mazie, who represented Meister. "The actions of Verizon in this instance justified \$125 million."

An email message seeking comment was left with Verizon.

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