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Verizon will pay \$125M to family of mom paralyzed when rotted pole fell on her

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The family of an Essex County mother who sued **Verizon** after a weathered pole fell on the woman and left her paralyzed settled its lawsuit against the utility company on Monday for \$125 million, according to court documents.

Maria Moser Meister, 50, a lawyer from West Orange, was injured on Jan. 23, 2017 in Union City when she was struck by the pole as she waited for a bus for her commute to work in New York.

Court documents state the 43-year-old wooden pole was partially rotted and snapped at its base, crushing the woman's head and body.

Meister suffered multiple fractures of her spine, ribs, was paralyzed from her mid-chest down and now has limited use of her left arm, brain injuries and vision problems, the family's attorney, David Mazie of Roseland, told Law.com.

Meister at the time of the accident was general counsel for the finance firm Milberg Factors in New York, and previously had been an associate at Simpson Thacher & Bartlett.

The pole was co-owned by **Verizon** under an agreement with PSE&G and held equipment and wires from **Verizon** and PSE&G.

Her husband, Peter Meister, sued the utility companies along with Altice USA, although PSE&G and Altice had not used the pole for decades. **Verizon** took full responsibility for the pole's condition, according to court records.

Essex County Superior Court Judge Stephen L. Petrillo issued an order Monday approving the settlement in which **Verizon** pays \$125 million, PSE&G pays \$250,000 and Altice pays \$25,000.

Maria Meister will receive \$118 million and her husband will receive \$7 million, according to the order.

"This is a very tragic circumstance, and nobody gets paid these kinds of numbers without having a catastrophic, life-changing injury," Mazie said, according to Law.com. "This has devastated her life and her husband and children, and she will never be put back together."

Mazie called the settlement the largest in New Jersey history, adding that the previous record was \$47 million for a suit against St. Barnabas Hospital.

According to Law.com, **Verizon** issued the following statement:

"Words cannot adequately express the remorse, sympathy and compassion that we have for Maria Meister and her family. Maria, her husband and children have been constantly on our minds since this happened and will continue to be in the years to come. While no amount of compensation can make up for what was lost, we hope the resolution of this case helps bring some measure of comfort, and provides care for Maria and her family, now and in the future."

Caption: FILE PHOTO

the family of a woman who was paralyzed when a pole fell on her will receive \$125 million as the result of a settlement with Verizon.

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