

# Jury awards \$1.2 million in 2002 Kennywood death



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**PITTSBURGH** -- A jury awarded \$1.2 million to a couple whose daughter was killed five years ago when an amusement park roof broke loose during a storm.

The Allegheny County Common Pleas Court jury issued its verdict Friday in the case over the death of Stephanie Wilkerson, 29, of Monroeville, who was killed May 31, 2002, during the storm at Kennywood Park.

Strong winds toppled a pavilion housing The Whip ride, and Wilkerson was struck by the collapsing roof and pinned against a metal fence.

Judge R. Stanton Wettick Jr. divided the case into two parts, asking jurors to determine damages suffered by the Wilkersons. A later proceeding on punitive damages will determine liability on the part of Kennywood or the Landeau Building Co., which built the pavilion in 1994, and what percentage of the \$1.2 million is owed by each.

At trial, Helen and Sylvester Wilkerson testified about the loss and grief they have endured after losing their daughter, who lived at home with them. They declined comment after the verdict.

Jurors awarded money to compensate for lost future wages, services and for the loss of "comfort and society" but did not award damages for pain and suffering on the part of the deceased.

Kennywood attorney David B. White called the case "a terrible tragedy for the Wilkersons" but an accident. He said he considered the verdict appropriate.

"Our thoughts and prayers continue to be with the Wilkerson family," Kennywood president Peter J. McAneny said.

White said he will present evidence at the liability proceeding that tornado-level winds toppled buildings and blew off roofs and that Kennywood could not be at fault in such extraordinary circumstances.

Family attorney [Thomas R. Kline](#) said the pavilion was built with posts that did not meet the building code.