



Woman Awarded \$95.6 Million in Philadelphia Building Collapse Settlement

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By Laila Kearney

NEW YORK (Reuters) - A Ukrainian immigrant who underwent amputations after a Philadelphia building collapsed on her was awarded \$95.6 million as part of a settlement for victims of the 2013 disaster that killed seven people and injured 12 others, her attorney said on Friday.

An arbitrator responsible for dividing between victims the \$227 million personal injury settlement reached in February assigned 55-year-old Mariya Plekan the biggest piece of the sum, attorney Andrew Stern said.

Plekan was shopping in a Salvation Army on June 5, 2013, when the one-story thrift store was struck by debris from a vacant neighboring building that collapsed while being demolished.

Surgeons removed Plekan's legs and lower torso in a series of operations after she was rescued from the rubble, which she was stuck under for 13 hours.

Plekan also suffered lung and kidney problems from breathing in toxic materials while trapped, Stern said. She recently lost her ability to speak due to throat damage from the use of a breathing tube.

The settlement funds will allow Plekan, who will require constant medical care for the rest of her life, to achieve her goal of moving out of a nursing home to live with her children, Stern said.

"We're just so happy for her in this regard," he said. "It has been a long road."

In January, a jury found the Salvation Army and developer Richard Basciano, who had hired the company that improperly demolished the neighboring building, financially liable for the collapse.

The contractor, Griffin Campbell, was convicted of involuntary manslaughter and sentenced in January 2016 to 15 to 30 years in prison for his role in the collapse.

The only other person to face criminal charges stemming from the incident, excavator operator Sean Benschop, was sentenced to 7-1/2 to 15 years in prison.

A 52-year-old city inspector, who was tasked with checking the building under demolition, committed suicide a week after the collapse.

(Reporting by Laila Kearney; Editing by David Gregorio)