

## **Exxon Verdict Is Sixth Largest Ever to an Individual Historic \$1 Billion Outcome is Largest Property Damage Award**

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**Boston-** (May 23, 2001) - A jury's award of over \$1 billion to a retired Louisiana judge whose property was contaminated by Exxon Mobil Corp. is the sixth largest jury verdict in history to an individual plaintiff, and the largest award ever to an individual for property damage, according to *Lawyers Weekly USA*, a national legal newspaper for smaller law firms that tracks jury verdicts nationwide.

Usually jury awards of this magnitude involve egregious physical injuries," said Tom Harrison, publisher of *Lawyers Weekly USA*. "It's astounding that a jury could award \$1 billion in punitive damages to a single person where nobody was physically hurt."

The award is one-fifth as large as the punitive verdict in the Exxon Valdez case, Harrison noted. "It's stunning that a jury could award \$1 billion for contaminating 33 acres, when Exxon only had to pay five times that when the Valdez spilled 11 million gallons of oil and destroyed a large part of a state."

The award was issued Tuesday to former Jefferson Parish District Judge Joseph Grefer in Orleans Parish Civil District Court.

The largest verdicts in history to individual plaintiffs and families, according to *Lawyers Weekly USA*:

1. \$22 billion in Hawaii in 1997 to a treasure hunter who claimed he was tortured by former Philippines president Ferdinand Marcos.
2. \$5 billion in Missouri in 1992 to the family of a victim of serial killer Robert Berdella.
3. \$4.9 billion in California in 1999 to family members who were burned in a car fire after a Chevrolet Malibu was rear-ended by a drunk driver.
4. \$1.5 billion in Texas in 1998 to a Russian inventor who claimed he was swindled by his former business partners.
5. \$1.24 billion in Wisconsin in 1999 to the family of a woman burned in a go-cart fire.

The largest verdict ever was \$145 billion in punitive damages last year in a class action against the tobacco industry brought by Florida smokers.