

THE BUFFALONEWS / FRIDAY, MAY 4, 2007

## LOCAL NEWS

STATE SUPREME COURT

# Jury awards worker \$30.3 million

By MATI GRZYTA

NEWS STAFF REPORTER

A Sanborn man has been awarded \$30.3 million for career-ending injuries suffered Feb. 21, 2002, when he fell from a ladder in a building owned by the Town of Amherst

Peter E. Bissell, 44, suffered severe spinal and other injuries, and suffers partial paralysis of both legs, and is able to walk only with the assistance of braces and canes. Bissell's doctors have declared him pennanently disabled, and he will be taking pain medication the rest of his life, according to his lawyers, John F. Maxwell and William B. Collins.

The verdict was reached Thursday following a two-week trial before State Supreme Court Justice Paula L. Feroletto. The jury ordered carriers for the fonner McGonigle & Hilger Roofing Co. to pay the sum.

Bissell was repairing a town-owned building at 400 Mill St. when a ladder collapsed and he fell to a hardwood floor, his lawyers said

In June 2005, a State Supreme Court jury in Buffalo found the town liable for Bissell's injuries under state Labor Law. The town countersued McGonigle & Hilger.

Bissell's doctors also say he will require future surgery because of the "continuing degeneration of his spine," his lawyers said

Joseph DeMarie, the lawyer hired for the case by the town which later sold the Mill Street building - could not be reached to comment.

But Maxwell called the jury verdict "a victory for the town" as well as Bissell.

Court officials said Amherst is self-insured for up to \$10 million, meaning a verdict against the town could have forced a dramatic hike in town property taxes.

Lawyers for McGonigle & Hilger's carriers could not be reached to comment.

Court officials said the jury verdict will likely be appealed

*e-mail: mgryta@bvjnews.com*

WILLIAMSVILLE EAST