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## Company ordered to pay \$14 million to truck driver paralyzed in crash

By [Clarissa Hawes](#), Land Line staff writer

A truck company has been ordered to pay a truck driver \$14 million. He was paralyzed in a rollover crash on July 14, 2011, on Interstate 10 near Niceville, Fla., after leaving the company's repair facility just hours earlier.

According to court documents, Colin Lacy, 31, drove for FFC Environmental, which picks up used oil from major companies and recycles it. He arrived on July 14, 2011, to pick up his 2004 Freightliner. He had been instructed to take it to Empire Truck Sales LLC in Mobile County, Ala., a few days earlier for repairs to his tanker truck's antilock braking system.

Within 10 minutes of leaving Empire's facility, Lacy's attorney, Greg Allen, said his client called the company back, notifying them that the ABS light had come back on in his truck.

"Colin was told by Empire not to worry about it, that the light will go off on its own," Allen told *Land Line* on Wednesday, March 25. "Later in the day on July 14, it started to rain and his truck started shaking again. He put the brakes on to try and make it stop shaking. But with the ABS being out, it locked up, turned sideways with him on the interstate, went into the median, and rolled over."

Allen, of the Beasley Allen Law Firm in Montgomery, Ala., said this wasn't the only time Empire had worked on Lacy's truck.

A month earlier, in June 2011, Allen said that Lacy drove his truck to Empire for a preventive maintenance inspection. As part of the inspection, Allen claims an Empire mechanic caused a defect in the truck by leaving the lateral control rod detached, and also caused a defect in the Freightliner's brake system as well.

Soon after Lacy's PM inspection in June, Allen said that Lacy noticed his truck was vibrating and making a "metal-type noise."

While the jury assigned 80 percent fault to Empire, it also assigned 20 percent fault to the seat belt manufacturer, Indiana Mills and Manufacturing Inc. Allen claims Lacy's seat belt malfunctioned at the time of the crash after it made a "clicking sound, but failed to latch." Allen said he has worked on "other cases involving IMMI seatbelt failures in 2000 to 2005 Freightliners."

"The company never recalled them, and there are still vehicles out there that have those bad buckles in them," Allen said.

Daimler Trucks North America LLC, formerly Freightliner Corp., headquartered in Portland, Ore., and IMMI settled during pre-trial for a confidential amount, according to Allen.

During jury deliberations, Allen said the parties reached a "high-low agreement" in which Empire agreed to pay Lacy at least \$2 million, even if the jury found in favor of the defense. The deal also capped the maximum amount Lacy could be awarded at \$14 million. The jury in the case awarded Lacy nearly \$18.8 million.

"While our verdict was reduced by 20 percent, Empire has agreed to pay Colin \$14 million within 30 days with no appeals," Allen said. "It has been so long since the accident, and Colin really needs that money. While Colin will never be able to walk again, this money will go a long way to help him now that his livelihood as a truck driver has been taken away."

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