

## Injured ironworker gets \$6.6M jury award

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A federal jury awarded \$6.6 million to a Local 498 ironworker who was injured while working at [Chrysler's](#) Belvidere Assembly Plant.

Tyler Dahlstrand, then 27, alleged he was performing structural reinforcement to the building in July 2014 when he tripped and fell over a piece of plywood that was covered by welding blankets in his work area.

The plywood was not secured to the walking and working surface as it was supposed to be, Dahlstrand alleged.

As he was falling, Dahlstrand said, he tried to catch himself, causing his body to twist. He fell onto his back and landed on the steel "D-ring" connected to his safety harness, injuring his lumbar spine.

He was diagnosed with a vertebral disc herniation and eventually had to undergo surgery.

He was cleared to return to work at a "medium"-level capacity, but will never return to work as an ironworker.

Dahlstrand was employed by Midwest Steel, Inc. to do the work at the Chrysler plant, which is owned by FCA US LLC, formerly known as Chrysler Group LLC. Dahlstrand's attorneys said FCA was essentially working as its own general contractor and was in charge of certain construction, repairs and inspection being done at the plant.

Dahlstrand alleged that FCA retained control over the work of his employer Midwest Steel, which he claimed negligently failed to exercise that control in permitting a concealed piece of plywood to remain in place on the elevated walking surface which caused a tripping hazard for the workers.

The case went to a 10-day trial before U.S. District Judge [Manish S. Shah](#) of the [Northern District of Illinois](#). Several other defendants were named in the complaint, but the trial proceeded only on claims of construction negligence against FCA.

Dahlstrand argued that FCA failed to make a reasonable inspection of the premises and the work being done there, and failed to provide adequate safeguards to prevent injury, among other claims.

The jury returned a verdict in favor of Dahlstrand on March 30. He was assigned 8% contributory fault.

His award included amounts for past and future pain and suffering, loss of normal life, emotional distress, lost wages and benefits and increased risk of future harm.

Dahlstrand was represented by [Steven A. Berman](#) of [Anesi Ozmon Ltd.](#) and [Matthew S. Sims](#) of [Rapoport Weisberg & Sims P.C.](#)

"We were very pleased," Berman said. "The jury clearly agreed that we made a compelling case that Chrysler did retain control of the work, and it did not exercise that control carefully which was the ultimate cause of our client's serious injury."

"Tyler was one of the toughest clients that I've ever had the honor of working on behalf of," Sims said. "His resilience in the face of so much adversity made it a challenge at times to convey his harms and losses to the jury. But nevertheless, and to their credit, the jury ultimately acknowledged with the verdict they rendered, that they understood what Tyler had been dealing with for the last seven years."

FCA was represented by [Scott Stephenson](#) and [Cecil Porter](#) of [Litchfield Cavo LLP](#).

The attorneys could not be reached for comment, but FCA issued a statement.

"FCA US LLC thanks the Court and the members of the jury for their time," FCA said in a written statement. "While ultimately the jury apportioned some liability to FCA for the injuries Mr. Dahlstrand sustained from the accident that occurred on its premises, FCA denies causing the unfortunate accident. FCA remains committed to workplace safety, and the health and well-being of all those on its premises remains a top priority."

The case is Dahlstrand v. FCA US, LLC, No. 15-cv-7603.

Practice Areas: [Personal Injury Law](#)