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\$6.5M settlement in 2008 Huntley fatal crash

Almost two years to the day later, \$6.5 million has been awarded to the family of a woman who was killed in a crash involving a semi driver who was under the influence of drugs.

The settlement includes \$4.7 million for the wrongful death of Tabitha Carroll, \$1.5 million for her her husband's injuries, and \$300,000 for her son's injuries.

On Oct. 31, 2008, Carroll, her husband Randy, and then-3-year-old son Gabriel were on the way to a pumpkin patch. While their pickup truck was stopped on Route 47 in Huntley near I-90 and waiting to turn, the family was rear-ended by a semi driven by Jeffrey Repec, 32, of Spring Grove.

The impact of the semi, which was going about 60 mph, pushed the pickup into an Illinois Department of Transportation dump truck. Tabitha Carroll was pronounced dead at the scene, while Randy and Gabriel Carroll were airlifted with serious injuries.

The father and son now live in Woodstock. Randy's injuries, which left him hospitalized for a month, included a broken spine, facial fractures and respiratory failure. Gabriel suffered two broken legs, head injuries, and a laceration across his forehead that resulted in permanent scarring. He was unable to walk for a month following the crash.

"They will live with this grief and sorrow for the rest of their lives," said the Carroll family attorney, John Perconti. "Although justice was done here, it's not going to bring Tabitha back."

Repec, the semi driver, is currently serving a 45-month prison sentence. Prosecutors have said that he smoked marijuana within 12 hours of the crash and that there was enough of the drug in his system to cause impairment.

"Due to the carelessness and recklessness of this driver, a mother and wife lost her life," Perconti said. "But we believe this accident was especially tragic because it was preventable."

The lawsuit alleged that Geils Farms, which owned the semi that Repec had been driving, violated federal regulations by not randomly drug screening their drivers as well as failed to perform background checks or obtain a copy of each driver's driving record.

The semi was overloaded and also unsafe because its left rear turn signal was not working, five of ten brakes were out of adjustment, and some brake pads had been contaminated by oil or grease.

- Northwest Herald reporter Amber Krosel contributed to this report.

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