

City hit with \$3 million verdict after police tow truck strikes auto

A jury has decided the City of Buffalo should pay \$3 million to a woman who suffered serious spinal injuries when a police department tow truck ran a traffic light and triggered a crash downtown.

Brigette Brzezniak, of Cheektowaga, was 24 at the time and a passenger in a Ford Escape when it collided with the tow truck at Seneca Street and Michigan Avenue in 2013, according to her lawyer, Michael Scinta of the Brown Chiari law firm.

The city's Law Department has filed a notice that it intends to appeal. But the jury's verdict for pain and suffering could presage a second financial blow to City Hall from the same accident. Brzezniak's twin sister, Kristen, was driving the Escape, and she also injured her spine. She has her own lawsuit, which is scheduled to go to trial in State Supreme Court in 2017, Scinta said.

The autos crashed as tow truck driver Vincent J. Sorrentino, 27 at the time, returned to the city's police garage for his lunch break on April 22, 2013. Driving along Seneca Street, Sorrentino failed to stop at a blinking red light at Michigan Avenue, according to the written explanation he gave his employer. The Brzezniak vehicle, traveling north on Michigan near the Buffalo Transportation-Pierce Arrow Museum, slammed into the truck's passenger side.

Lawyers for Brigette Brzezniak explained in the lawsuit that she suffered cervical and lumbar injuries, and they presented a surgeon who testified about the lumbar fusion procedure she underwent.
