

Know Your Limits

July 2025

Jury Returns \$831 Million Verdict Against Bar and Owner Following Crash Caused by Drunk Driver—Liquor Liability

A Texas jury determined that a bar and its owner must pay a couple \$831 million for their role in serving alcohol to an underage patron who became intoxicated and caused a car crash. Before the 2021 incident, the 18-year-old was given a wristband and served multiple alcoholic drinks that led to him driving with a blood alcohol concentration of 0.23%, nearly three times the legal limit. After leaving the establishment, he drove a vehicle that collided with a guardrail and flipped, leaving debris strewn across the road. A 55-year-old man riding a motorcycle then hit the debris and was thrown 40 feet from his bike, resulting in multiple fractures, including a fractured neck, and a traumatic brain injury. He remains paralyzed on his right side and suffers from expressive aphasia, which makes it hard for him to communicate or express thoughts. The driver of the vehicle, who suffered minor injuries, pleaded guilty to assault with a motor vehicle, causing serious bodily injury, a third-degree felony. The victim's spouse filed a civil suit individually and for her husband under Texas' Dram Shop Act. Following a default judgment, a trial to determine damages was held, and the jurors found the owner and his establishment, each 45% responsible for the incident and the intoxicated driver 10% responsible. Compensatory damages were awarded for past and future medical expenses, pain and suffering, disfigurement, lost wages, loss of consortium and mental anguish. Punitive damages were also included in the jury award.

Electric Utility Company to Pay \$82.5 Million After Wildfire—Liability

A California utility company has agreed to an \$82.5 million settlement after a 2020 wildfire burned over 114,000 acres, destroying 87 homes, 178 vehicles and 83 other structures. Six firefighters were also injured. Federal officials alleged that the blaze started when its tree maintenance contractor contacted power lines. The federal government filed a lawsuit in 2023 on behalf of the Forest Service to recover the costs of extinguishing the fire and for damage to natural resources and property. Over 100 miles of trails had to be closed, and campgrounds, wildlife and habitats were also impacted. The company previously acknowledged that it could be responsible for the fire and stated that a dormant power line may have been the cause. Investigations remain ongoing.

Company to Pay up to \$400 Million After Data Breach—Cyber Liability

A global cryptocurrency exchange company that was targeted by cybercriminals in May has informed U.S. regulators that it plans to spend between \$180 million and \$400 million to reimburse victims and resolve the situation. The company said the malicious actors bribed support agents to steal cryptocurrency from users and facilitate social engineering attacks. The cybercriminals then tried to blackmail the company, demanding \$20 million to keep the crime quiet. Rather than pay that amount, the company offered a \$20 million award to incentivize catching the hackers. The company reported that phone numbers, email addresses and partial Social Security numbers were compromised. It also stated that it fired the workers involved in leaking the information and that it was improving its fraud-monitoring systems.

School District to Pay \$16.2 Million to Families of Abuse Victims — Liability

A Colorado school district agreed to pay \$16.2 million to families of 10 children with disabilities who were the victims of abuse by a paraprofessional. The now-former paraprofessional was sentenced to over 12 years imprisonment after videos showed him physically assaulting and harassing the minors, who ranged from 6 to 11 years old, on a school bus. According to the lawsuit filed in 2023, the district knew the individual pleaded guilty to child abuse in 2012 before he was hired. The school board president stated the school had spent nearly \$2 million on safety improvements after the incident.

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