

## TOP 20 PERSONAL INJURY AWARDS OF THE YEAR

# Casino Dealer Wins \$8.7M for Injuries Worsened by Response Delay

An Atlantic County jury on Oct. 12, 2010, ordered the South Jersey Transportation Authority and the state police to pay a casino dealer \$8,748,310 for car-accident injuries exacerbated by a delayed response during a winter storm.

The jury, in *Henebema v. South Jersey Transportation Authority*, found the SJTA 80 percent liable and the state police 20 percent liable for Janet Henebema's injuries, which included the amputation of her right leg above the knee, says her attorney, Williamstown solo **Ralph Paolone**.

Henebema, 37, of Mays Landing, was driving home on the Atlantic City Expressway from her job as a dealer at the Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa when she hit a patch of black ice in Egg Harbor Township at 4:28 a.m., spun out of control and

collided with a concrete barrier.

She called 911 and reported that her car was blocking traffic. At the time, the state police were handling at least eight other calls, Paolone says.

When Henebema tried to get out of her car, she was hit by another car, driven by an off-duty Atlantic City police officer, Domenico Raddi. Her right leg was partially severed and she suffered a broken pelvis and cuts to her head.

Henebema was taken to the hospital about 10 minutes later, but doctors were unable to save her leg, Paolone says.

She alleged that the SJTA and the state police were at fault because 37 minutes passed between the time snow starting falling and the first accident Henebema was trying to avoid. The suit also said the defendants could have called for assistance

from neighboring communities, but did not do so.

The jury found Raddi not liable.

Henebema, who spent six weeks in the hospital, now uses a prosthetic leg. She has since returned to her job at the casino, Paolone said.

The jury awarded her \$6,150,330 for pain and suffering, \$2,247,980 for future medical costs and \$350,000 for past and future wage loss.

SJTA, an independent authority which has an indemnification agreement with the state police, was represented by **Steven Swain**, of Phillipsburg's **Florio Perrucci Steinhardt & Fader**, who did not return a call.

SJTA spokeswoman Sharon Gordon says only that the agency will appeal.

Superior Court Judge **Joseph Kane** presided over the trial. ■