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LOCAL BROWARD

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Warehouse worker gets \$8.2 million

BY ANDREA ELLIOTT

aelliott@herald.com

A Broward jury awarded a Hollywood man \$8.2 million after he lost part of his foot while working at a Publix Super Markets warehouse in Deerfield Beach — the same facility where five men have been killed on the job in the past 13 years.

Charles McCoy, 22, was 16 and a junior varsity basketball player at McArthur High School in Hollywood when a large sheet of wood in the Deerfield Beach distribution warehouse fell onto his left foot in March 1996, nearly cutting off his big toe.

Eventually, the toe was removed. Half of McCoy's foot

will be partially amputated as a result of the accident, though no surgery date has been set, his attorney, Diana Santa Maria, said Thursday.

"It's fair compensation for a horrific injury," said Santa Maria. "He feels vindicated."

At the time of the accident, McCoy was working for a now-defunct Miami-based company, Big Foot Enterprises, which provided manual laborers to the Publix warehouse at 777 SW 12th Ave. McCoy previously settled with Publix for an undisclosed amount — much less than the current award, said Santa Maria. The amount of the previous settlement will be deducted from the \$8.2 million, she said.

Broward County Judge

Charles Greene ruled that Big Foot was liable, and a jury determined the damages on Wednesday.

A spokesperson for Nova Casualty, Big Foot's insurer, said he did not know about the lawsuit.

"I have to check into it," said Bill Sheldon, the company's claims manager.

McCoy could not be reached for comment. Publix officials did not return a call for comment.

McCoy was working in the warehouse when he tried to lift a 40-pound pallet — the wooden siding used to contain products in large quantities — from a six-foot pile of pallets when one crashed onto his foot. Doctors tried to save his toe,

but amputated it three weeks later because it had become gangrenous. McCoy spent two months in and out of the hospital, underwent four operations, and had to repeat the tenth grade, his attorney said.

McCoy will continue to undergo surgeries and treatment, she said.

Five men have been killed at the warehouse since 1988. The fatal accidents ranged from slipping on debris to being asphyxiated by a hydraulic ramp.

McCoy's accident slashed his chances at becoming a college basketball player, said Santa Maria. McCoy had received a letter from a basketball recruiter at Florida A&M University in Tallahassee.