

METRO

SATURDAY

Widow wins \$25.3 million in tractor case

A Mobile County Circuit Court jury has awarded \$25.3 million to the widow of a man who drowned after a tractor he was riding rolled over and pinned him down in a pond.

The jury found in favor of Eloise Gillam and against FMC Corp., manufacturer of the tractor. The verdict followed a four-day trial before Judge Ferrill McRae.

Mrs. Gillam's attorney, Jim Yance, said evidence showed Owen Gillam was operating an FMC tractor equipped with a front end loader, moving dirt for a neighbor near a small pond in Tillman's Corner in 1988.

The tractor rolled over into the water pinning Gillam under the tractor, said Yance.

Greg Breedlove, another attorney representing Mrs. Gillam, said the man drowned after being held down in the water by the weight of the tractor.

Yance said FMC admitted it was aware a rollover hazard existed with this tractor and "the hazard was significantly increased" with a front end loader attached.

He also said FMC officials admitted they were aware that if the tractor did roll over during operation, the operator likely would be seriously injured or killed.