

VIRGINIA LAWYERS WEEKLY

WEEKLY EDITION

'Largest Verdicts' of 2008 presented

By Alan Cooper
January 12, 2009

Virginia Lawyers Weekly's survey of the "**Largest Jury Verdicts of 2008**" found 15 seven-figure judgments in 2008, barely half the number recorded two years ago and five fewer than reported last year.

Not that there weren't a substantial number of big cases last year. VLW's Verdicts and Settlements reports had 35 million-dollar settlements, perhaps a further reflection of the precipitous decline in the number of civil jury trials and the increased use of mediation.

Incomplete numbers from the Supreme Court of Virginia indicate that the state once again had fewer than 700 jury trials, less than a third the number of jury trials a decade ago.

Look for a list of those million-dollar settlements in the Jan. 26 edition of VLW.

Twelve of the 15 large jury verdicts from 2008 were personal injury cases, and another case had a personal injury component to it – a woman suffered migraine headaches and other ailments from mold caused by what the jury concluded was a defectively constructed house.

Five of the personal injury cases involved medical malpractice and two were asbestos-exposure cases.

Only three cases had a business component: the defective house, a claim of racial discrimination in the termination of a contract and a contention that the design for a Web site did not meet the standards set by the Virginia Uniform Computer Information Transactions Act.

The two biggest cases in 2007 were patent infringement actions. VLW had no report of a seven-figure patent infringement trial in the state last year.

Newport News attorney Robert R. Hatten had a seven-figure verdict for the third year in a row, the only attorney to do so. All the cases involved mesothelioma that Hatten's juries found were caused by asbestos products manufactured by John Crane Inc.

See the full list

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