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Kaster & Lynch,
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Top #10 Ten

JURY VERDICTS OF 2005

Family Wins \$61.2M In Ford Explorer Rollover



By Reni Gertner

In the ninth loss for Ford in Explorer rollover cases, a Florida jury awarded \$61.2 million to the parents of an 18-year-old boy who was killed in a 1997 accident.

Ford won the first 13 Explorer rollover cases to go to trial, losing its first case in June 2004 with a \$368.6 million verdict. Since then, Ford has suffered eight more plaintiffs' awards while winning several defense verdicts and settling numerous other cases.

In the \$61 million verdict, the plaintiffs contended that design defects in the Explorer caused it to rollover four times, ejecting their son and killing him at the scene.

It was a "classic Explorer loss-of-control rollover" case, said plaintiffs' attorney Bruce Kaster of Ocala, Fla.

Ford argued that the Explorer is safe, like other similar SUVs. The company has traditionally blamed Explorer rollovers on their Firestone tires. But Kaster contended that the tires have been only one part of the problem.

After a two week trial and more than a day of deliberations, the jury awarded \$61.2 million in compensatory damages.

According to a statement provided by Ford, the company is planning to appeal.

"This tragic accident occurred when the driver of the vehicle fell asleep at the wheel while traveling at highway speeds," the statement said. "Real-world experience and testing show that the Explorer is a safe ve-