

lehighvalleylive.com

Forks Township man wins \$1.1 million in workers' compensation after suffering stroke

Published: Tuesday, February 21, 2012, 4:57 AM Updated: Tuesday, February 21, 2012, 8:38 AM



Andrew George | The Express-Times

By

A **Forks Township** man has won a \$1.1 million award for wage losses after suffering a stroke in 2010 while on the job at the Victaulic plant in Forks Township.

John Ruschak, 50, a former employee of **Victaulic**, which manufactures pipe-fittings, suffered a stroke at work in May 2010. It left him paralyzed on the left side of his body and unable to return to work.

In a Jan. 31 decision, Judge Beverly Doneker, a Pennsylvania workers' compensation jurist, awarded Ruschak \$1.1 million in past and future wage losses and determined that Victaulic will be held liable for his stroke-related medical bills. The case was heard in Workers' Compensation Court in **Easton**.

Court documents show that at the time of the stroke, Ruschak had been working as an auto-pour operator, pouring liquid steel into a mold, while dressed heavily in a room temperature that exceeded 100 degrees.

Ruschak, who was 48 at the time of the injury, had been an employee at Victaulic on and off over the previous 22 years.

David Stern, a **Philadelphia-based lawyer** specializing in workers' compensation claims, represented Ruschak in his case against Victaulic. Stern said he was able to prove that Ruschak's stroke was directly related to the nature of his job and his working conditions.

"**I think justice was served,**" Stern said. "**This is a gentleman who had a long association with this company (and) he was doing very difficult labor, despite how they tried to portray it during the**



[View full size](#)

Express-Times File Photo | BILL ADAMS

Victaulic is headquartered in Forks Township.

course of litigation. Unfortunately, he had this event which was a direct result of the work he was doing."

Eric Luftig, a spokesperson for Victaulic, said the company did not wish to comment on the case but maintained that the welfare of its employees is a top priority.

"Victaulic cares about and is always focused on the safety and well being of our employees,"

Luftig said. **"Out of respect for the individual involved in this matter, Victaulic will not comment on this specific case."**

Ruschak could not be reached for comment.

According to Stern, Victaulic argued unsuccessfully that the work Ruschak was doing was not strenuous in nature even though evidence showed the company referred to the area where Ruschak worked as the "hot room."

In a statement, Stern said most workers' compensation cases are related to orthopedic injuries. He called it very rare for a claim to be brought on a work-related stroke.

© 2012 lehighvalleylive.com. All rights reserved.