

CASE STUDIES

Unanimous Jury Defense Verdict for Ford in Product Liability Trial

Product Liability Litigation

Client: Ford Motor Company

Opponent: Nathaniel Wallace

Type of case: Product liability

Court: Federal District Court, Southern District of Mississippi

Length of trial: Six days

Amount in dispute: Approximately \$2.5 million

Result: Defense verdict for Ford Motor Company

We defended Ford Motor Company in a federal jury trial in Mississippi against allegations of a manufacturing defect. A Mississippi Highway Patrol trooper was injured when his state-issued 2008 Ford Crown Victoria left the roadway and hit a tree at approximately 55 miles per hour. The trooper alleged that a fractured ball-joint bolt caused him to lose control of the vehicle and hit the tree, and that fractured bolt itself was the result of a manufacturing defect. He demanded approximately \$2.5 million. A fact witness for the trooper testified that the broken bolt was found 200 feet upstream of the tree impact.

On behalf of Ford, we contended that the ball-joint bolt broke because of the high speed impact with the tree, and that the vehicle can actually be steered properly even without the bolt. Ford's expert metallurgist further testified that the tests he conducted on the broken bolt proved that the fracture was due to the impact to the tree, and was not a manufacturing defect. The jury agreed with Ford and returned a unanimous defense verdict.

Value to Client: Active annual cases in Mississippi reduced from 60 to 12 with Baker Donelson resulting in \$25 million legal fee savings and 90 percent reduction in annual legal spend.