

JURY AWARDS BICYCLIST \$14.2M

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The \$14.2 million awarded Jeffrey Gath yesterday by a Middlesex Superior Court jury will allow the 34-year-old Lowell man to return to his parents' home and receive the constant nursing care he needs, his lawyer said.

Gath, mildly retarded since childhood, was an avid cyclist, said the lawyer, Frederic N. Halstrom of Boston.

Halstrom said his client was riding home from his job at a Lowell rehabilitation hospital on Oct. 30, 1998, past a facility on Chelmsford Street owned by M/A-Com Inc. of Lowell, when a gust of wind flung an unlatched iron gate into his path.

Gath was knocked from his bike and hit the pavement face first, causing severe brain trauma, Halstrom said.

Lowell General Hospital doctors performed two emergency neurosurgeries and saved his life, although Gath now has permanent physical and mental disabilities and requires round-the-clock care, the lawyer said.

The award against electronics giant M/A-Com will allow Gath to fulfill a fervent desire and return to his parents' home with the 24-hour nursing care that doctors say he needs, Halstrom said.

"He said that he wanted to ride a bike again and that he wanted to go home," Halstrom said. "He'll never get on a bike again, but he is at least going home. That's what this money will enable him to do."

A lawyer for M/A-Com, which manufactures a variety of components for cellular telephones and other electronic devices, said the company plans to appeal the verdict.

"It is M/A-Com's policy not to comment on legal proceedings. As we stated in court, we plan to pursue M/A-Com's post-trial remedies," said the lawyer, James S. Franchek of Boston.

Gath had no health insurance. His medical expenses already total more than \$500,000, Halstrom said. During the trial, experts testified that Gath's future medical expenses could be as much as \$18 million.

While the lawsuit was still pending, Gath's father offered to settle the suit for \$9 million, then rejected M/A-Com's counter-offer of \$6 million, Halstrom said.

Gath's family also sued Burns International Services Corp., which provided security for M/A-Com, but the jury found the company not liable.