

ORANGE COUNTY

Wrong-Side Driver Crash Settled for \$3.75 Million

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WESTMINSTER—A Yorba Linda sales manager, paralyzed when his vehicle was hit head-on by a rental car driven by an Australian tourist on the wrong side of the road, will receive \$3.75 million in a settlement reached Friday.

Paul Cieslak, 54, reached the settlement with the other driver, Scott Collier, and Hertz Corp. near the end of a personal injury trial in Orange County Superior Court.

The settlement included \$1.25-

million for Richard Ketter, 48, a passenger in Cieslak's car whose legs were broken in the 1994 accident on Highway 95 near Blythe.

Cieslak alleged that the car rental company shared liability by not providing adequate warnings to tourists accustomed to driving on the left side of the road in their own countries, his attorney, Jack H. Anthony, said.

Hertz denied any wrongdoing, and did not admit liability in making the settlement.

The two Orange County men were traveling at 5:30 a.m. to make

a golf game. As they came around a corner at 55 mph, they were struck by Collier, just clearing a hill on his way to Las Vegas.

"Mr. Collier had stopped on the side of the road to look at a map, and when he got back on the road, he started driving on the left side . . . like they do in Australia," Anthony said.

The tourist suffered minor injuries. Cieslak was paralyzed from the chest down.