

## GLENDALE NEWS-PRESS

### Metrolink reaches tentative \$39-million settlement

*Attorney for victims of the deadly 2005 derailment in Glendale says just one lawsuit remains outstanding.*

By Melanie Hicken

Published: Last Updated Wednesday, December 30, 2009  
3:28 PM PST

GLENDALE — Metrolink has agreed to pay roughly \$39 million to settle all but one of the lawsuits filed against the agency in the aftermath of a January 2005 derailment that killed 11 passengers on the Glendale border, an attorney for the plaintiffs said Wednesday.

Of the 186 complaints filed against the agency in the wake of the accident, all but one of the suits have been resolved, said Jerome Ringler, the lead attorney for the plaintiffs. All 11 wrongful death lawsuits have been settled and 15 of the 16 serious injury lawsuits have been resolved.

The remaining cases involved non-critical injuries.

A Los Angeles County Superior Court judge handling the cases vacated a Jan. 4 trial date and urged both parties to "work diligently" to resolve the remaining case, a six-figure serious injury lawsuit, Ringler said.

"We fully expect that last one to resolve in the next three to four months, but there is no guarantee," he said.

In October, Ringler said 90% of the cases had been settled for about \$30 million with six cases remaining.

The recent settlements, which await approval from the Metrolink board of directors, bring years of litigation to near finish, even as the rail agency grapples with lawsuits stemming from the deadly Chatsworth crash last year that killed 25 people.

Prior to that crash, the 2005 Glendale derailment — which occurred when a Metrolink train hit a parked Jeep Cherokee left behind by Juan Manuel Alvarez on the tracks near Chevy Chase Drive, killing 11 and injuring nearly 200 others — had been the deadliest incident in the rail agency's history.

Alvarez was sentenced last year to serve 11 consecutive life sentences in prison for causing the derailment.

"All of those involved that were injured or who lost loved ones are very pleased to have this resolution behind them to move forward with their lives," Ringler said.

Angela Starr, a Metrolink spokeswoman, declined to comment, citing ongoing litigation.



Passengers board a southbound Metrolink train on Monday, December 14, 2009. (Roger Wilson/Leader)