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LA landlord hit with \$5.2M verdict for neglecting disabled tenant

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A superior court jury delivered a \$5.2 million verdict in favor of a disabled man against a prominent Los Angeles landlord and property manager for failing to fix elevators that the tenant relied on to access his apartment.

The Los Angeles County Superior Court case ended Friday in favor of Chris Curry, a wheelchair-bound man who said the property managers and owners neglected elevator repairs in his North Hollywood apartment complex for long stretches of time, limiting access to his unit and causing him emotional distress and financial loss.

A complaint filed by the plaintiff's attorneys stated that the defendants violated the California Fair Employment and Housing Act, as well as Curry's civil rights.

Beginning in September 2015, the situation worsened, Curry said, as he was periodically stranded in his apartment or forced to call the fire department to carry him to his unit. He was unable to leave his apartment for five days over the 2015 Thanksgiving holiday, he said.

Co-defendants Academy Pointe and JK Residential Services are subsidiaries of JK Properties, owned by Haresh Jogani, whose companies own and manage more than 110 apartment buildings in LA. The building

management company Anza Management Company was also named in the suit. Another defendant, Statewide Enterprises, settled early in the case, and was not a defendant at trial.

"The jury really wanted to send a message that they can't treat people like this," lead attorney John J. Perlstein said. "So hopefully it got sent." Dan Reisman served as co-counsel.

According to Perlstein, the management companies sent many emails to the property owners notifying them of the need to fix the elevators and that disabled tenants relied on them. At one point, the vice president of Statewide met with the property owner's son, urging them to come up with a plan of action to address the situation, Perlstein.

Nothing was done until the building was cited by the city twice in one month in August 2015, Perlstein said.

The cost of fixing the elevators was \$26,000. Monthly rental income for the apartment complex was \$270,000.

The attorney for the defense, Jeffrey Korn, could not be reached for comment Tuesday.

The defense suggested the jury award Curry \$2,250, or the equivalent of three months' rent, Perlstein said.

"That didn't resonate too well with the jury," Perlstein said.