

Case Name: Steve D. Sharpley v Metro-North Commuter Railroad

Date Decided: March 27th, 2009

Originally Filed in: New York ()

Decided by: New York Southern District Court (Federal)

Court: U.S.D.C. - S.D. New York

Judge: District Judge Daniels

Citation: 2009 WL 855790 (S.D.N.Y.)

Background:

Plaintiff, Steve Sharpley, was a former signal inspector employed by defendant, Metro-North Commuter Railroad ("Metro North"). Sharpley filed suit under the Federal Employers' Liability Act ("FELA") to recover damages for injuries sustained as a result of his employer's negligence in maintaining its premises. Sharpley presented evidence at trial that as he was stepping down out of his employer's truck, he placed his foot upon a heightened portion of the ground. The ground was wet from a recent snowfall and shifted under Shipley's weight. He grabbed the steering wheel, attempting to regain his composure. He felt a pop in his back and wrenched his lower back. Sharpley blamed the darkened conditions at the work site for his inability to see the heightened portion of ground. The trial evidence demonstrated Metro-North had previously received complaints about the inadequate lighting. Other evidence showed that Metro-North had provided Sharpley with a flashlight, which he failed to use when he alighted from the vehicle. After a four-day jury trial, judgment was found in favor of Sharpley, who was awarded \$832,403 in damages. Metro-North moved for judgment as a matter of law or, alternatively, for a new trial. Metro-North contended that the jury's failure to find contributory negligence as well as its excessive award were against the weight of evidence and constituted a miscarriage of justice.

Issue:

Sharpley's Issue: Sharpley argued that Metro-North maintained an unsafe workplace by failing to install overhead lighting. Metro-North's Issue: The defense counsel stressed to the jury that the issue of lighting was irrelevant. They contended the cause of the accident was Sharpley's failure to properly secure his footing and not slip.

Overall Issues Discussed or Touched Upon in this Case:

- *Insufficient Evidence of Negligence*

Held:

Comments:

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