

TAMPA

Man hurt in construction accident awarded \$64.5M

A Hillsborough County jury has awarded \$64.5 million to a man who was seriously injured when a building collapsed while he worked at a Mosaic Company construction site in 2009. Robert Matthews was 25 when an 8,000-pound prefab building fell on him, crushing his pelvis, legs and internal organs. The jury's decision, handed down March 27, found three companies responsible for the accident, but assigned the vast majority of the blame to Mosaic, a large fertilizer maker that operates throughout Central Florida. The other companies involved were Semco Construction, which was hired by Mosaic to prepare the construction site at a Polk County phosphate mine, and Mark Rice Inc., the construction company paid to install a prefab building on the site. The injured construction worker was employed by Mark Rice Inc. at the time of the accident. Though the jury's award was sizable, Matthews, 30, will not receive exactly that amount. That's because although three companies were implicated, the jury's decision applied to only one — Semco Construction — which the jurors found bore 15 percent of the responsibility for the accident. As such, Semco must pay Matthews about \$10 million, including attorney's fees. Jurors found Mosaic 75 percent responsible for the building's collapse. But because Mosaic paid Matthews and his attorneys a confidential sum to settle the case in 2014, the company is not bound by the jury's award. Whether the amount Mosaic paid Matthews comes close to the figure he would have received had he taken the company to trial is unclear. "Mosaic didn't get to walk. They took responsibility," said attorney Steven Yerrid, who represented Matthews. He