

**PRESS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**October 16, 2009**

**ETOWAH COUNTY JURY AWARDS \$1.25 MILLION IN UNINTENDED  
GUN DISCHARGE CASE AGAINST TAURUS INTERNATIONAL**

On Thursday, an Etowah County Circuit Court jury awarded a 28 year old Boaz man a \$1.25 million judgment in an unintended gun discharge case. The trial, which took place in Gadsden before Etowah County Circuit Judge Anthony Clark Hall, began October 8<sup>th</sup> and lasted one week. Lead counsel for the plaintiff was Todd Wheelles of Morris, Haynes & Hornsby in Birmingham. Assisting attorney Wheelles during the trial was Tommy James, also of Morris, Haynes & Hornsby. The jury began deliberating on Thursday at approximately 12:45 p.m. and concluded at approximately 3:45 p.m., taking only about 3 hours to return a verdict. Of the \$1.25 million judgment, \$500,000 was for compensatory damages and \$750,000 was for punitive damages.

The lawsuit, originally filed on February 13, 2007, involved the unintended discharge of a PT111 9mm Millennium Taurus handgun. The 28 year old Boaz man, who owns a business in the Sardis area of Etowah County, was leaving home for work when the handgun unintentionally fell to the floor in his garage. The Taurus 9mm was in a holster with the safety in the "on" position when it struck the ground and discharged, severely injuring the Plaintiff. When the handgun discharged, the bullet fired up through the young man's abdomen, impacting his pancreas, spleen, and diaphragm, creating two holes in his left lung. Ultimately, the young man was hospitalized for over a week, was forced to have his spleen removed and endured a great deal of harm and injuries as a result of this incident.

The Plaintiff's contention was that the safety mechanism on the PT111 9mm Millennium Taurus handgun failed to prevent a "drop fire." An internal safety device known as a striker block safety was defective and failed to prevent the striker (firing pin) from impacting the bullet and causing the gun to discharge, when subjected to a sharp

impact such as a drop. The jury found that this defect in the PT111 9mm Millennium Taurus handgun caused the Plaintiff's injuries.

Representatives of Taurus International Manufacturing, Inc. admitted that there are more than 100,000 of these handguns on the market in the U.S. currently. Attorney Todd Wheelles is hopeful that this judgment will encourage Taurus to fix this problem and recall the other PT111 9mm Millennium Taurus handguns on the market, stating that, "Handgun owners should be able to trust that the safety devices on their handguns will work. This was a clear case of a defective safety on this PT111 9mm Millennium Taurus handgun causing injury to my client."

For further information please contact Todd Wheelles at (256) 596-1472 or (205) 324-4008.