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## CAPITAL BUSINESS

### Paralyzed construction worker awarded \$21.7 million after accident at Pepco site

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A Maryland jury has awarded \$21.7 million to Hugo Hernandez Palomino, a construction worker who was paralyzed from the neck down due to a work-related injury at a Pepco site in 2013.

Palomino, 28, was working on scaffolding at a Pepco power house in Montgomery County on May 6, 2013, when he was struck by a transformer. The force sent him eight feet into the air and he landed on concrete, snapping his spine, said Palomino's attorney, William Applegate of the Charleston law firm Yarborough Applegate.

Palomino also received third-degree burns on 10 percent of his body from electric shock because the transformer, which the workers were told had been de-energized, had not been turned off, Applegate said.

Palomino sued Pepco for negligence. At the time of the accident, Palomino was working for a Pepco subcontractor, V&T Builders, but V&T was not named as a defendant in the lawsuit.

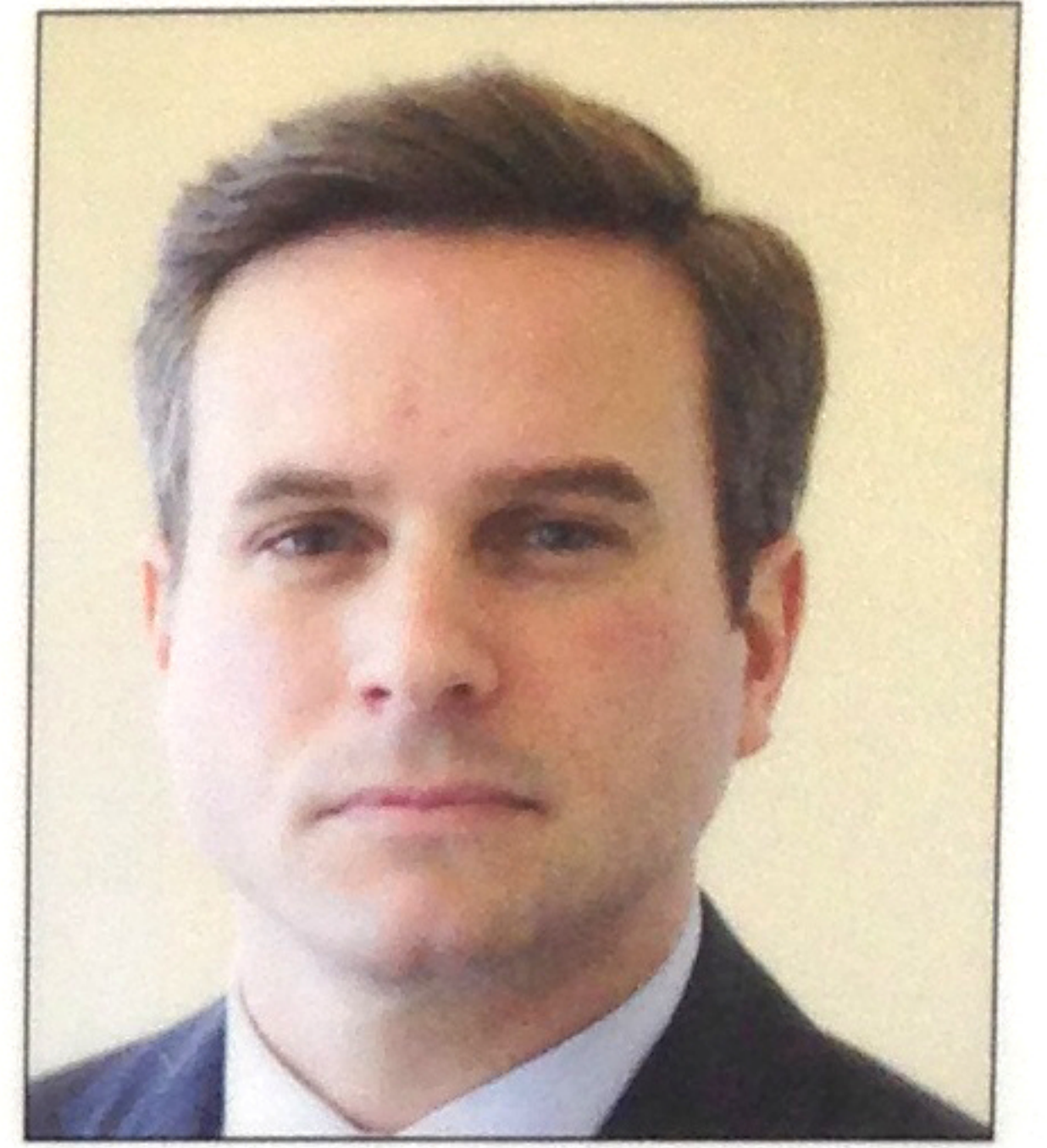
The jury, which reached the ver-



William E. Applegate IV



David B. Yarborough, Jr.



David B. Lail

dict Thursday, originally awarded Palomino \$35.9 million to cover both economic and non-economic damages. But because Maryland law caps non-economic damages at \$770,000, that amount has been reduced to \$21.7 million. The money is to go toward Palomino's past and future lost wages, and past and future medical care, Applegate said.

"That will be extremely helpful to a very deserving young man who was in a situation through no fault of his own, and will hopefully give him the opportunities in life going forward that he deserves," Applegate said.

Pepco accepted liability in the accident, and the question that went to the jury was not whether Pepco was at fault, but rather how much Palomino should be awarded.

"We deeply regret the accident and injuries Mr. Hernandez-Palomino suffered while working for a subcontractor on Pepco property," a Pepco spokesperson said in a statement. "While Pepco was not cited by the Maryland Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MOSH) for any safety violations as a result of this accident, we accepted responsibility and always planned to fairly compensate Mr. Hernandez-Palomino."