

Building collapse lawsuit settled

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A lawsuit filed against the owner of a downtown Santa Cruz building that collapsed, killing two people during the Oct. 17 earthquake, has been settled out of court.

The suit had been filed by the mother and daughter of a young man killed when the wall of Bookshop Santa Cruz fell on the adjacent Santa Cruz Coffee Roasting Co., and by a woman trapped for 45 minutes in the rubble.

Two fatalities

Killed when the masonry wall crashed onto the coffee roasting company were Robin Ortiz and Shawn McCormick. The wrongful death suit was filed by McCormick's mother and his 2-year-old daughter, Amber, and by Brittany Manriquez, who was rescued from the debris.

Details of the settlement were not available, but Thomas Nelson — attorney for Ron Lau, owner of the building that housed the bookstore — called it a "global settlement," meaning that all parties to the lawsuit agreed to the deal.

Had warnings

According to the lawsuit, Lau knew his building was unsafe, having been warned by three experts that it was structurally unsound.

Before Manriquez was pulled to safety, according to court documents, she lay in the rubble "close enough to touch Shawn, and felt his lifelessness while she waited and hoped that her own life would be spared."

Although details of the agreement were not available Monday, at an earlier discussion among lawyers, Manriquez offered to settle for \$550,000; Amber McCormick for \$950,000; and Ethel McCormick, the mother, for \$250,000, according to documents filed in Santa Cruz County Superior Court.