

Injection Injury: Emergency Department Nurse Ruled Not Negligent.

A construction worker came to the hospital's emergency department after accidentally injecting paint thinner into his left index finger while maintaining a high-pressure paint sprayer.

He had first gone to a physician's office near the job site. The finger was injected with lidocaine and he was told to go to the hospital emergency room.

The emergency-room triage nurse could see only a small dark ring where the paint thinner had been infused. However, in her initial exam she also noticed when she pressed on the end of the injured finger the capillary refill time was excessive. That indicated to her that the circulation was impaired. She alerted the charge nurse and spoke to one of the physicians.

The physician merely told her to put an orange dot on the chart and have him wait to be seen. He did not get into the operating room for seven more hours.

An injection injury is an extreme emergency requiring the affected digit to be opened and drained immediately to avoid the necessity of amputation.

CALIFORNIA COURT OF APPEAL
October 13, 2006

The California Court of Appeal upheld a jury's verdict finding the physicians and the hospital negligent but absolving the emergency room nurse from liability.

Although an injection injury is not considered life threatening for purposes of emergency-room triage, it nevertheless demands immediate attention to minimize the risk of amputation, the court said. ***Morrison v. Loma Linda Univ. Med. Ctr.***, 2006 WL 2925362 (Cal. App., October 13, 2006).