

Emergency Room: Severed Fingers Require Prompt Attention From Orthopedist.

A salesman accidentally cut two fingers off his non-dominant left hand while using a power saw at home.

His severed fingers were put in a plastic bag, the plastic bag was put in a bag of ice and he was taken to the hospital.

In the ER he was seen right away by the triage nurse and classified as urgent, that is, he needed to be seen by the next available physician.

He was seen by a resident physician a few minutes later, then by the emergency room physician a few minutes after that.

STAT Orthopedic Consult Ordered No Follow-Up

The emergency room physician ordered an immediate orthopedic consult. However, after the order was written there was no prompt follow-up to call in the orthopedist.

As the evening and night wore on the patient had his vital signs taken several times, was sent for x-rays, got a tetanus shot and was checked several times by the nurses and by the resident physicians.

An orthopedist finally saw him almost five hours after he first arrived at the hospital.

About a half hour later a resident physician simply closed the finger wounds with stitches.

The judge in the Court of Claims of New York awarded the patient \$525,000.

It was not a relevant legal issue for the judge to try to apportion blame among the nurses and physicians at the hospital as to who had the personal responsibility to call the orthopedist. It basically was a lawsuit against the State of New York alleging negligence by one or more State employees working at a State-operated medical facility. **O'Shea v. State of New York, 2007 WL 1516492 (N.Y. Ct. Cl., January 22, 2007).**