



CALIFORNIA MAN WINS \$50 MILLION IN LAWSUIT OVER BURNS FROM STARBUCKS TEA - ASSOCIATED PRESS

Posted on March 17, 2025 by ASSOCIATED PRESS



This is the Starbucks sign on Black Friday shoppers line at a Starbucks kiosk in the Walden Galleria in Buffalo, NY., Friday, Nov. 29, 2024. (AP Photo/Gene J. Puskar)

A delivery driver has won \$50 million in a lawsuit after being seriously burned when a Starbucks drink spilled in his lap at a California drive-through, court records show.

A Los Angeles County jury found Friday for Michael Garcia, who underwent skin grafts and other procedures on his genitals after a vented tea drink spilled instantly after he collected it on Feb. 8, 2020. He has suffered permanent and life-changing disfigurement, according to his attorneys.

Garcia's negligence lawsuit blamed his injuries on Starbucks, saying that an employee didn't wedge the scalding-hot tea firmly enough into a takeout tray.

"This jury verdict is a critical step in holding Starbucks accountable for flagrant disregard for customer safety and failure to accept responsibility," one of Garcia's attorneys, Nick Rowley, said in a statement.

Starbucks said it sympathized with Garcia but planned to appeal.

"We disagree with the jury's decision that we were at fault for this incident and believe the damages awarded to be excessive," the Seattle-based coffee giant said in a statement, adding that it was "committed to the highest safety standards" in handling hot drinks.

U.S. eateries have faced lawsuits before over customer burns.

In one famous 1990s case, a New Mexico jury awarded a woman nearly \$3 million in damages for burns she suffered while trying to pry the lid off a cup of coffee at a McDonald's drive-through. A judge later reduced the award, and the case ultimately was settled for an undisclosed sum under \$600,000.

Juries have sided with restaurants at times, as in another 1990s case involving a child who tipped a cup of McDonald's coffee onto himself in Iowa.