

Harveys hit with \$3.5 mil. judgment in tainted water case

Within seconds of taking a sip of what she thought was water, Julia Ellis doubled over at the bar at Harveys Lake Tahoe.

The casino's mistake of serving her a highly toxic cleaning solution instead of bottled water resulted in a jury this week rendering a verdict that Ellis be paid \$3.25 million in damages for past and future medical bills, as well as for pain and suffering.

"Food safety is a national priority. This is a tragedy that never should have happened and that could have been avoided," Christopher Dolan, Ellis' attorney, said in a statement.

The case was tried in San Francisco Superior Court. Dolan said the company has accepted responsibility. What the jury decided Monday was what damages should be.

On Dec. 2, 2007, Ellis asked a Harveys bartender for water. He thought that's what he brought her. In reality a Harveys employee had poured a highly caustic, highly toxic, concentrated cleaning solution with a PH of nearly 13.5 out of 14 into an unmarked Harrah's water bottle and left it in the kitchen, where it was soon served to Ellis.

Ellis, who lives in Mill Valley, suffered severe chemical burns to her esophagus and stomach.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report