

# Philly To Pay \$3M To Pedestrians Hurt In Police Chase: Attys

By **P.J. D'Annunzio**

Law360 (August 6, 2025, 6:10 PM EDT) -- The city of Philadelphia has agreed to pay nearly \$3 million to resolve a civil rights lawsuit filed by pedestrians, including a child, who were hit by a police motorcycle engaged in a high-speed pursuit, the plaintiffs' attorneys said Wednesday.

The settlement resolves the **civil rights suit** in Pennsylvania federal court that alleged the Philadelphia Police Department violated its own policies for conducting high-speed chases, which permit such chases only when police are attempting to apprehend a suspect who poses an immediate threat to public safety.

"This settlement is important not just to compensate the victims of this horrific accident, but to hold the Philadelphia Police Department accountable for the flagrant and life-threatening violation of its pursuit policies. When law enforcement officers engage in reckless and unnecessary high-speed chases on our roadways they place everyone in danger," said attorneys David K. Inscho and Priscilla Jimenez of Kline & Specter PC in a statement Wednesday.

The city did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Litigation was initiated against the city and officer Dwayne Merrell in 2019 by Lillie Mae Stubbs and Lyesha Clark, the parent of a then-6-year-old girl who was hit by the police vehicle.

The case stems from Merrell's pursuit of Caliph Rashaad Douglass, who was riding a dirt bike illegally on city streets in the Cobbs Creek neighborhood and over county lines into Upper Darby in Delaware County on April 15, 2017, according to the complaint.

At 1:27 p.m., Merrell struck the plaintiffs as they crossed 69th Street, throwing them 42 feet from the point of impact, the complaint said. It adds that Stubbs sustained head and extremity injuries while the child was taken to Children's Hospital of Philadelphia for emergency surgery for head, neck and extremity injuries.

The chase violated Philadelphia police directive 9.4, which says that an officer can engage in high-speed pursuit only if there is probable cause to believe that a fleeing suspect attempted or committed "a forcible felony," possesses a deadly weapon and could escape, according to the complaint.

Merrell was not authorized to engage in the pursuit and did not contact emergency services after striking the plaintiffs, the complaint said.

"By engaging in an unjustified high-speed police pursuit in a densely populated area without reasonable belief that Douglass committed a requisite offense and/or posed an immediate threat to public safety, defendant Merrell and the city of Philadelphia, as set forth above, were deliberately indifferent and demonstrated a reckless disregard to the safety, bodily integrity, well-being, liberty and substantive due process rights of plaintiff Stubbs and minor-plaintiff Clark," the complaint said.

The plaintiffs are represented by David K. Inscho and Priscilla Jimenez of Kline & Specter PC.

The city is represented by Derek R. Kane of its Law Department.

The case is Clark et al. v. Merrell et al., case number 2:19-cv-01579 in the U.S. District Court for the

Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

--Editing by Amy French.