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Settlement Reached Over Leaked CHP Photos of Fatal Crash

The death of Orange County resident Nikki Catsouras in a fiery Porsche crash led to leaked CHP crash scene photos and prompted a lawsuit

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LADERA RANCH (KTLa) - A Ladera Ranch family tormented by grisly accident photos of their daughter on the Internet has settled a lawsuit against the California Highway Patrol.

The photos had been leaked and went viral worldwide. The settlement ends a 4½-year court battle that rewrote state law.

The financial terms of the settlement, reached ahead of a jury trial scheduled for March, were not immediately available.

The deal puts an end to an emotionally charged legal drama waged by Lesli and Christos Catsouras on behalf of their daughter, 18 year-old Nicole "Nikki" Catsouras.

Images of Nikki's crash are permanently on display on hundreds of websites after her Oct. 31, 2006 death.

On top of the grief of losing the eldest of their four daughters, Lesli and Christos Catsouras say they and their three surviving daughters have had to endure a never-ending nightmare of knowing that a click of a mouse can unknowingly bring up ghastly images of Nikki on their computer screen.

"The family was compensated for the emotional pain and suffering associated with the release of the photos," Catsouras family attorney Keith Bremer said. "The CHP came to the table with significant funds in an effort to resolve this case and remove any chances of a monumental verdict."

Nikki was killed after she sped off in her father's Porsche on the afternoon of Halloween 2006. It was a high-performance vehicle she had never driven before, according to her parents. Driving at more than 100 mph, she lost control of the Porsche after she clipped another car on the 241 toll road in Lake Forest.

The Porsche then careened from northbound lanes across a grassy median into the southbound lanes before slamming into an unmanned toll booth. Nikki died instantly.

Within two weeks, images of the crash began popping up on websites. The images were taken by CHP investigators on the scene and never were supposed to be publicly released.

The CHP later admitted that two dispatchers were responsible for the leak.

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