

Fire Victim Accepts Award of \$5 Million

By MYRNA OLIVER, *Times Staff Writer*

A 21-year-old woman construction worker who lost both feet and was badly scarred in an on-the-job fire two years ago won a \$5-million cash settlement Tuesday from four companies she sued for causing the accident.

Larry Booth, attorney for Heidi Denney, said the settlement is believed to be the largest out-of-court cash award for a personal injury case in Los Angeles County history. Larger total awards have been paid in "structured" settlements in which defendants purchase a lifetime annuity benefiting the plaintiff.

Los Angeles Superior Court Judge John L. Cole approved the settlement with J. D. Carley Corp., general

contractor; Hunt Chemical Co., manufacturer of the Acri-Sheen cement sealer that ignited; Stuart Air Conditioning Co., and Denney's employer, Paul M. Wolff Co. Booth said he intends to pursue the case against a fifth defendant, U.S. Elevator Co., maker of elevator equipment that he believes sparked the fire.

Under the agreement, Hunt will pay its maximum insurance policy coverage of \$500,000 and Stuart \$250,000, with Carley and Wolff sharing payment of the remainder of the award.

Booth said Denney was working as a cement sealer Aug. 17, 1982, on a commercial construction site in Monterey Hills when a spark ignited fumes from the Acri-Sheen material causing a massive fire. Denney, who suffered extensive burns and scarring over most of her body, spent 14 months in the hospital and had both feet amputated. Booth said she is unable to walk on artificial feet and will spend the rest of her life in a wheelchair.

Married, Denney has a daughter who was only a few months old when the accident occurred.