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State to pay \$750,000 to family of man killed during trooper-involved crash

By Paul Mickle, The Trentonian

TRENTON — An out-of-court settlement of \$750,000 has been made between the state and the Trenton family of a new father killed in a 2007 pileup on the Atlantic City Expressway that his lawyers blamed on state troopers.

John Robinson, 21, was killed when his disabled car was hit and burst into flames just after he ran back to it to get his cell phone at 10:30 the night of July 30 that year. He had a baby son who is now seven.

Lawyers Cliff Bidlingmaier and Robin Lord, who represented the boy and Robinson's mother, put responsibility for the death on Jersey troopers.

Lord said Robinson was a passenger in a car that crashed with a state police cruiser pulling out into the 65-mph highway. Everyone jumped from the wrecked car and ran to the shoulder.

With the cop flashing the cruiser lights further down the highway, Lord said, cars were screeching around the wreck. Robinson decided to rush back to the car to get his cell phone to call for help.

It was hit while he was leaning into the car, which burst into flames charring much of his body by the time troopers were able to get at

him to pull him out of the fire.

That night troopers arrested the driver of the third car and charged him with causing an injury in an accident while driving with a suspended license, but not death by auto.

The Robinson lawyers said his death was “at the hands of the state police” for their handling of lighting and other issues after the chaotic crash that night on the ACE.

Bidlingmaier and Lord also complained that Atlantic County Superior Court Judge Nelson Johnson had to declare a mistrial after an earlier trial because missing videos from the patrol cruisers turned up at the end of the proceedings.

The state was represented by Toms River lawyers Tom Monahan and Jared Monaco, who failed to return repeated calls for comment.