

Judge selects lawyers in Toyota litigation

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Attorney Mark Robinson appointed co-lead for plaintiffs in the Toyota MDL.

A federal judge in Santa Ana appointed four attorneys Friday to oversee hundreds of lawsuits accusing Toyota Motor Corp. of selling dangerous vehicles.

U.S. District Judge James Selna made the ruling as part of the process in managing the massive litigation involving lawsuits filed across the country and consolidated in a single proceeding under him.

Two plaintiffs' lawyers, Mark P. Robinson Jr. of Newport Beach and Elizabeth Cabraser of San Francisco, were named to lead the consolidated case accusing the Japanese automaker of negligence that caused wrongful deaths and injuries.

Two other lawyers, Steve Berman of Seattle and Marc M. Seltzer of Los Angeles were named to direct lawsuits alleging that mechanical defects have diminished the value of the cars.

Dozens of plaintiff's lawyers appeared before Selna on Thursday to request the coveted — and potentially lucrative — lead attorney positions.

More than 320 lawsuits have been filed in federal and state court since Toyota began recalling millions of vehicles because of defects that could cause cars to suddenly accelerate, a problem blamed for more than 100 deaths across the country.

The majority of those lawsuits have been consolidated before Selna. Other lawsuits, such as one involving the Aug. 28 deaths of off-duty California Highway Patrol Officer Mark Saylor and his family, remain in state courts across the country.