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FRIDAY, JULY 9, 1999

Ford Rouge offer tops \$30M

Each of 20 families would get \$1 million, plus salaries, trusts.

By David Shepardson
The Detroit News

DEARBORN — Ford Motor Co.'s written offer to settle 20 potential lawsuits from the Rouge powerhouse explosion will swell to more than \$30 mil-

lion under a confidential settlement proposal, several attorneys for the victims said Thursday.

Six workers were killed and 14 seriously injured when a six-story boiler exploded without warning at the powerhouse that provided electricity for the 1,100-acre complex that has 10,000 Rouge Steel and Ford employees.

The Feb. 1 accident caused as much as \$1 billion in damages,

making it the most expensive industrial accident in U.S. history.

In a two-page memorandum, Ford said it will offer each of the 20 families a \$1-million lump sum payment. The company also will pay the salaries, benefits and medical insurance for the injured workers, and the families of the six deceased workers, until they are or would have been 65.

Ford also will provide trust funds for the minor children of the workers killed and injured. The trust funds are valued at about \$100,000 each.

Each family also will get a separate \$25,000 payment that can be used for any purpose, including to pay for a memorial or to donate to charity.

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What's next

■ Ford Motor Co. hopes to have signed agreements with the 20 families of injured and killed workers by late July or early August, at a cost of more than \$30 million.

■ A state investigation into the boiler explosion and workplace safety issues is to be completed by early August.

■ The Dearborn Fire Department's report into the cause of the explosion is being written now. All material must be submitted by July 20.

■ One injured worker, John Sklarczyk, remains hospitalized and will likely be at St. Vincent Mercy Medical Center in Toledo for the next few months.



Prosecutor battles to free convict

Kaplan wants verdict set aside after man passes polygraph tests.

By Katie Merx
The Detroit News

MT. CLEMENS — Convicted burglar Albert Wright has two aliases, two birthdays, three Social Security numbers and a rap sheet 5 feet long.

Today a prosecutor will ask

done and I'm retired, I don't want to look back and wonder if I convicted an innocent man."

Wright, 38, of Madison Heights, is serving a two- to 15-year prison sentence. He has pleaded guilty, or been convicted, on multiple counts of larceny, assault with a dangerous weapon, malicious destruction of property, burglary, felony retail fraud, driving under the influence of liquor and fleeing police.