

Prieto, Miner, Boies Named to Lead Plaintiffs in Air Bag Case

by Julie Kay
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Peter Prieto of Podhurst Orseck in Miami walked away with one of the most coveted court appointments in the country, being named lead plaintiffs counsel to oversee the Takata air bag multidistrict litigation.

U.S. District Judge Federico Moreno picked Prieto for the top position late Tuesday. He is considered the next generation of leadership at Podhurst Orseck, one of the preeminent plaintiffs law firms in Florida. Firm founder Aaron Podhurst, still practicing at 78, also will be involved in the case.

"I'm honored to have been appointed by Judge Moreno as chair lead counsel, and my firm and I look forward to working with the other

talented and experienced lawyers from across the country whom he appointed to leadership positions," Prieto said. "This is going to be a team effort."

The consolidated Miami case has separate tracks for personal injury and economic loss.

Other lead counsel chosen by the Miami judge for the potentially lucrative consolidated case are Curtis Miner of Colson Hicks Eidson in Coral Gables for lead counsel of the personal injury cases. David Boies of Boies, Schiller & Flexner in New York and Todd Smith of Power, Rogers & Smith in Chicago were tapped as co-lead counsel of the economic damages cases.

Moreno also named three lead counsel for the plaintiffs steering committee: James Cecchi of Carella, Byrne, Cecchi, Olstein, Brody & Agnello in Roseland, New Jersey; Elizabeth Cabraser of Lieff Cabraser Heimann & Bernstein in San Francisco; and Roland Tellis of Dallas-based Baron & Budd in Los Angeles.

Moreno said he would consider geographic and ethnic diversity in making his selections. His picks include one woman, one Hispanic and one Indian-American, Tellis

Tellis said he plans to devote all his time to the case going forward and is checking out the Los Angeles-Miami flight schedule. He was involved in another consolidated class action case in Miami, a bank overdraft case against the nation's top banks, also before Moreno.

The judge laid out what some of the lawyers are calling a tight schedule requiring discovery to be completed by November and class certification motions by December.

"I was honored to be chosen," Tellis said. "I filed the first case along with the Podhurst firm. We took steps to organize the group and centralize the cases in Miami. I think it's a wonderful team that the court chose, and we have a lot of work to do in a short amount of time. There are millions of documents to sort through and Japanese witnesses to interview."

Twenty of the nation's top class action plaintiffs firms applied for leadership positions in the case. Among those not chosen: Stuart Grossman of Grossman Roth in Coral Gables, Steve Berman of Hagens Berman Sobol Shapiro in Seattle and Adam Moscovitz of Kozyak Tropin & Throckmorton in Coral Gables.

Ten automakers have recalled about 22 million cars globally to replace Takata inflators. Six deaths have been blamed on the problem.

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Peter Prieto of Podhurst Orseck said he was honored to be named lead plaintiffs counsel in the Takata air bag multidistrict litigation.



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