

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF
FLORIDA, TAMPA DIVISION

Helen M. Ramirez v. General Motors LLC

Ramirez · No. 8:24-cv-2468-TPB-AEP · Decided January 27, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida ruled on cross-motions for summary judgment in a product-liability action arising from injuries allegedly caused by side airbags in a 2021 Cadillac CT5. The court denied the plaintiff’s motion and granted General Motors LLC’s motion because the plaintiff lacked admissible expert evidence establishing a product defect or causation, and because her proposed brake-defect theory was not pleaded. The court directed entry of judgment for General Motors on both counts and closure of the case.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida, Tampa Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Tom Barber
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida, Tampa Division
DECIDED	January 27, 2026
DOCKET	8:24-cv-2468-TPB-AEP
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Cross-motions for summary judgment in a removed diversity action asserting Florida strict-liability and negligence claims based on allegedly defective side airbags in a 2021 Cadillac CT5.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Summary judgment is appropriate when there is no genuine dispute as to any material fact and the movant is entitled to judgment as a matter of law. On cross-motions, each motion must be considered separately, with reasonable inferences resolved against the party whose motion is under consideration.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished federal district court order; precedential status unknown

TOPICS

- summary judgment
- products liability
- strict liability
- negligence
- civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure

products liability

torts

summary judgment

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Plaintiff was entitled to summary judgment on liability for her strict-liability and negligence claims.
2. Whether Defendant was entitled to summary judgment because Plaintiff lacked expert testimony to prove that the airbags were defective and caused her injuries.
3. Whether Plaintiff could introduce a defective-brakes theory for the first time in opposition to Defendant's summary-judgment motion.
4. Whether Plaintiff's untimely expert disclosure could support her claims after the court struck the disclosure.

HOLDINGS

1. Because the alleged defect in the Cadillac's roof-rail side airbags was not patent and involved matters beyond the capacity of laypersons, expert testimony was required to establish both product defect and causation. Plaintiff's failure to timely disclose an expert meant she could not prevail on either the strict-liability or negligence claim.
2. Plaintiff could not inject a new defective-brakes theory for the first time in a response opposing summary judgment after discovery had closed and Defendant had moved for summary judgment.
3. Plaintiff was not entitled to summary judgment, and Defendant was entitled to summary judgment on both counts because Plaintiff lacked the expert evidence necessary to prove defect and causation.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"Summary judgment is appropriate "if the movant shows that there is no genuine dispute as to any material fact and the movant is entitled to judgment as a matter of law.""

"Cross-motions for summary judgment will not, in themselves, warrant the court in granting summary judgment unless one of the parties is entitled to judgment as a matter of law on facts that are not genuinely disputed."

"Because Plaintiff has stricken Plaintiff's untimely notice of expert, Plaintiff therefore has no expert to establish either a defective product (based on the design, manufacture, construction, or assembly of the roof rail side airbags) or causation – this is an analysis beyond the capacity of laypersons and requires the testimony of an expert."

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

On April 3, 2021, Helen M. Ramirez was a passenger in a leased 2021 Cadillac CT5 when a truck ran a red light and struck the driver's side doors. Ramirez alleged that the front passenger-side window airbag exploded violently, knocked her into the center console, and caused serious injuries requiring hospitalization and

rehabilitation. She asserted that the vehicle's side airbags were defective and brought strict-liability and negligence claims against General Motors LLC.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff originally filed the action in the Circuit Court of the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit in and for Hillsborough County, Florida. Defendant removed the case to the Middle District of Florida on October 23, 2024. After discovery closed, Plaintiff attempted to introduce a defective-brakes theory and later attempted an untimely expert disclosure; the court rejected the new theory and struck the expert disclosure. The court denied Plaintiff's motion for summary judgment, granted Defendant's motion, directed entry of judgment for Defendant on Counts I and II, and ordered the case closed.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Anderson v. Liberty Lobby, Inc., 477 U.S. 242, 249 (1986)
- Hickson Corp. v. N. Crossarm Co., Inc., 357 F.3d 1256, 1260 (11th Cir. 2004)
- Jeffery v. Sarasota White Sox, Inc., 64 F.3d 590, 593-94 (11th Cir. 1995)
- Shotz v. City of Plantation, 344 F.3d 1161, 1164 (11th Cir. 2003)
- Am. Bankers Ins. Grp. v. United States, 408 F.3d 1328, 1331 (11th Cir. 2005)
- United States v. Oakley, 744 F.2d 1553, 1555 (11th Cir. 1984)
- Bricklayers Int'l Union, Local 15 v. Stuart Plastering Co., 512 F.2d 1017 (5th Cir. 1975)
- Worsham v. A.H. Robins Co., 734 F.2d 676, 687 n.8 (11th Cir. 1984)
- Blinn v. Smith & Nephew Richards, Inc., 55 F. Supp. 2d 1353, 1361 (M.D. Fla. 1999)
- Savage v. Danek Med., Inc., 31 F. Supp. 2d 980, 983-85 (M.D. Fla. 1999), aff'd, 202 F.3d 288 (11th Cir. 1999)
- Alexander v. Danek Med. Inc., 37 F. Supp. 2d 1346, 1349-50 (M.D. Fla. 1999)
- Humphreys v. Gen. Motors Corp., 839 F. Supp. 822, 826 (N.D. Fla. 1993), aff'd, 47 F.3d 430 (11th Cir. 1984)