

§2-807. Actions for wrongful death

1. Liability notwithstanding death. Whenever the death of a person is caused by a wrongful act, neglect or default, and the act, neglect or default is such as would, if death had not ensued, have entitled the party injured to maintain an action and recover damages in respect thereof, then the person or the corporation that would have been liable if death had not ensued is liable for damages as provided in this section, notwithstanding the death of the person injured and although the death was caused under circumstances that amount to a felony.

[PL 2017, c. 402, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); PL 2019, c. 417, Pt. B, §14 (AFF).]

2. Wrongful death action; damages; limitations. Every wrongful death action must be brought by and in the name of the personal representative or special administrator of the deceased person, and is distributable, after payment for funeral expenses and the costs of recovery including attorney's fees, directly to the decedent's heirs without becoming part of the probate estate, except as may be specifically provided in this subsection. The amount recovered in every wrongful death action, except as specifically provided in this subsection, is for the exclusive benefit of the deceased's heirs to be distributed to the individuals and in the proportions as provided under the intestacy laws of this State in sections 2-101 to 2-113. The jury may give damages as it determines a fair and just compensation with reference to the pecuniary injuries resulting from the death. Damages are payable to the estate of the deceased person only if the jury specifically makes an award payable to the estate for reasonable expenses of medical, surgical and hospital care and treatment and for reasonable funeral expenses or, in the case of a settlement, the settlement documents specifically provide for such an allocation to the estate for the same. In addition, the jury may give damages not exceeding \$1,000,000 adjusted for inflation as provided in section 1-108 for the loss of comfort, society and companionship of the deceased, including any damages for emotional distress arising from the same facts as those constituting the underlying claim, to the persons for whose benefit the action is brought. The jury may also give punitive damages not exceeding \$500,000. An action under this section must be commenced within 3 years after the decedent's death, except that if the decedent's death is caused by a homicide, the action may be commenced within 6 years of the date the personal representative or special administrator of the decedent discovers that there is a just cause of action against the person who caused the homicide. If a claim under this section is settled without an action having been commenced, the amount paid in settlement must be distributed as provided in this subsection. A settlement on behalf of minor children is not valid unless approved by the court, as provided in Title 14, section 1605.

[PL 2023, c. 390, §3 (AMD).]

3. Damages for conscious suffering. Whenever death ensues following a period of conscious suffering, as a result of personal injuries due to the wrongful act, neglect or default of any person, the person who caused the personal injuries resulting in such conscious suffering and death is, in addition to the action at common law and damages recoverable therein, liable in damages in a separate count in the same action for such death, brought, commenced and determined and subject to the same limitation as to the amount recoverable for such death and exclusively for the beneficiaries in the manner set forth in subsection 2, separately found, but in such cases there is only one recovery for the same injury.

[PL 2017, c. 402, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); PL 2019, c. 417, Pt. B, §14 (AFF).]

4. Maine Tort Claims Act. Any action under this section brought against a governmental entity under Title 14, sections 8101 to 8118 is limited as provided in those sections.

[PL 2017, c. 402, Pt. A, §2 (NEW); PL 2019, c. 417, Pt. B, §14 (AFF).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 2017, c. 402, Pt. A, §2 (NEW). PL 2017, c. 402, Pt. F, §1 (AFF). PL 2019, c. 198, §1 (AMD). PL 2019, c. 417, Pt. A, §3 (AMD). PL 2019, c. 417, Pt. B, §14 (AFF). PL 2023, c. 390, §3 (AMD).

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