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Worker wins \$11m lottery court case

Los Angeles
October 3, 2003

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A Californian convenience store worker who said her boss stole her \$US8 million (\$A11.79 million) lottery ticket has recouped her winnings in court.

A jury in Pomona, east of Los Angeles, ordered Circle K Stores and assistant store manager Gurinder Ruby to pay \$7.9 million to compensate 27-year-old Arwa Farraj for emotional distress and the value of the winning ticket.

Ms Farraj bought the ticket while working on Christmas Day in 1999 at a Circle K store in La Verne, California. The next day, she showed the ticket to her supervisor, Ruby, who told her it was worth \$88 and paid her the money from his own pocket.

About a month later, Ms Farraj learned that Ruby had won a \$8 million lottery jackpot but continued to work at the store, her lawyer Browne Greene said.

She reported the suspected theft to police and state lottery officials, who agreed but could do nothing because Ruby had already claimed the jackpot and sent much of the money overseas, Mr Greene said. She sued in February 2000.

The jury heard that the store's surveillance tape had been erased during the five minutes when Ms Farraj bought her ticket.

Time sheets showed Ruby was not in the store during the time stamped on the ticket, and bank records revealed he had paid the store manager \$11,500 shortly after collecting the jackpot, Mr Greene said.

The jury deliberated for five hours before finding Circle K, which collected \$40,000 for selling the winning ticket, and Ruby liable for fraud and conversion.

Lawyers for Ruby and for the Arizona-based convenience store chain, a unit of oil company ConocoPhillips, could not be reached for comment.


Ms Farraj planned to use the winnings to finish university and take care of her parents and eight siblings.

- Reuters

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