

Jury Finds Meta, YouTube Guilty in Watershed Social Media Addiction Case

A California jury on Wednesday found YouTube and Meta guilty of using design features that promoted social media addiction among minors.

Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg had testified during the landmark trial, saying that Meta was not linked to mental health issues that plagued the plaintiff, who was awarded \$3 million in compensatory damages, according to NBC News. The jury will next decide on punitive damages.

The lawyers for plaintiff . said the verdict is “a historic moment” for children and families.

“But this verdict is bigger than one case,” the lawyers said. “For years, social media companies have profited from targeting children while concealing their addictive and dangerous design features. Today’s verdict is a referendum – from a jury, to an entire industry – that accountability has arrived.”

□Big Tech loses addiction trial:

A jury just found Meta and Google (YouTube) liable in a landmark social media addiction trial, awarding \$3 million in damages to the young

– Gunther Eagleman™ (@GuntherEagleman) March 25, 2026

Meta was found to be responsible for 70 percent of the damages; YouTube for the balance, according to The New York

Times.

The news outlet noted the significance of the case: "The finding validates a novel legal theory that social media sites or apps can cause personal injury. It is likely to factor into similar cases expected to go to trial this year, which could expose the internet giants to further financial damages and force changes to their products."

TikTok and Snapchat settled out of court for undisclosed amounts.

Earlier this month, a New Mexico jury declared Meta liable for failing to protect users of its apps from child predators. Meta was ordered to pay \$375 million in that case.



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Joseph VanZandt, one of . 's lawyers. said the trial revealed a hidden truth.

"This is the first time in history a jury has heard testimony by executives and seen internal documents that we believe prove these companies chose profits over children," he said.

"There is a long road ahead, but this decision is quite significant," said Clay Calvert of the American Enterprise Institute.

"If there are a series of verdicts for plaintiffs, it will force the defendants to reconsider how they design social media platforms and how they deliver content to minors," Calvert said.

During the trial, internal Meta and YouTube documents were presented, indicating that executives at each company discussed the negative effects of their technology platforms on children.

"We respectfully disagree with the verdict and are evaluating our legal options," a Meta representative said, according to Fox Business.

But Sacha Haworth, executive director of the watchdog Tech Oversight Project, called the ruling an "earthquake that shakes Big Tech's predatory business model to its core," according to the New York Post.

"This trial was proof that if you put CEOs like Mark Zuckerberg on the stand before a judge and jury of their peers, the tech industry's wanton disregard for people will be on full display," Haworth said.

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