

WHAT TO DO WHEN THE JURY GETS IT WRONG: POST-VERDICT REMEDIES

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This written material is meant to serve as a quick reference guide for those handling litigated claims in Iowa State Courts when faced with an unfavorable verdict. The Iowa Rules of Civil Procedure set forth below, outline the RULE BASED options for dealing with an erroneous or unfavorable verdict. Additional considerations will be discussed at the presentation.

JUDGMENT NOTWITHSTANDING VERDICT - RULE 1.1003

On motion, any party may have judgment in that party's favor despite an adverse verdict, or the jury's failure to return any verdict under any of the following circumstances:

1.1003(1) If the pleadings of the adverse party fail to allege some material fact necessary to constitute a complete claim or defense and the motion clearly specifies such failure.

1.1003(2) If the movant was entitled to a directed verdict at the close of all the evidence, and moved therefor, and the jury did not return such verdict, the court may then either grant a new trial or enter judgment as though it had directed a verdict for the movant.
I.C.A. Rule 1.1003

NEW TRIAL

RULE 1.1002 New Trial Defined

A new trial is the reexamination in the same court of any issue of fact or part thereof, after a verdict, or master's report, or a decision of the court.
I.C.A. Rule 1.1002

RULE 1.1004 New Trial

On motion, the aggrieved party may have an adverse verdict, decision, or report or some portion thereof vacated and a new trial granted if any of the following causes materially affected movant's substantial rights:

1.1004(1) Irregularity in the proceedings of the court, jury, master, or prevailing party; or any order of the court or master or abuse of discretion which prevented the movant from having a fair trial.

1.1004(2) Misconduct of the jury or prevailing party.

1.1004(3) Accident or surprise which ordinary prudence could not have guarded against.

1.1004(4) Excessive or inadequate damages appearing to have been influenced by passion or prejudice.

1.1004(5) Error in fixing the amount of the recovery, whether too large or too small, in an action upon contract or for injury to or detention of property.

1.1004(6) That the verdict, report or decision is not sustained by sufficient evidence, or is contrary to law.

1.1004(7) Material evidence, newly discovered, which could not with reasonable diligence have been discovered and produced at the trial.

1.1004(8) Errors of law occurring in the proceedings, or mistakes of fact by the court.

1.1004(9) On any ground stated in rule 1.1003, the motion specifying the defect or cause giving rise thereto.

I.C.A. Rule 1.1004

TIME FOR MOTIONS AND EXCEPTIONS - RULE 1.1007

Motions under rules 1.1003 and 1.1004 and bills of exception under rule 1.1001 must be filed within ten days after filing of the verdict, report or decision with the clerk or discharge of a jury which failed to return a verdict, unless the court, for good cause shown and not ex parte, grants an additional time not to exceed 30 days. Resistances and replies may be filed and supporting briefs may be served as provided in rules 1.431(4) and 1.431(5).

I.C.A. Rule 1.1007

CONDITIONAL RULINGS ON GRANT OF MOTION - RULE 1.1008

1.1008(1) Any motion may be filed under rule 1.1003 or 1.1004 without waiving the right to file or rely on any other of such motions.

1.1008(2) Not later than ten days after entry of a judgment notwithstanding the verdict, the party whose verdict has been set aside may file a motion for new trial pursuant to rule 1.1004.

1.1008(3) If a motion for judgment notwithstanding the verdict is granted, the court shall also rule on any motion for new trial by determining whether it should be granted if the judgment is thereafter vacated or reversed, and shall specify the grounds for granting or denying the motion for new trial. If a motion for new trial is thus conditionally granted, the order thereon does not affect the finality of the judgment. If a motion for new trial has been conditionally granted and the judgment is reversed on appeal, the new trial shall proceed unless otherwise ordered by the appellate court. If a motion for new trial has been conditionally denied, the appellee may assert error in that denial; and if the judgment is reversed on appeal, subsequent proceedings shall be in accordance with the order of the appellate court.

CONDITIONAL NEW TRIAL - RULE 1.1010

1.1010(1) The district court may permit a party to avoid a new trial under rule 1.1003 or 1.1004 by agreeing to such terms or conditions as it may impose, which shall then be shown of record and a judgment entered accordingly.

1.1010(2) If the term or condition imposed is a choice between consenting to a reduced, modified or increased judgment amount or proceeding to a new trial, regardless of whether imposed by the district court or an appellate court, then the choice shall be made by filing a written consent to the reduced, modified or increased judgment with the clerk of the district court in which the case was tried within the following times:

a. If imposed by the district court, on or before seven days before the date when an appeal must be taken pursuant to Iowa R. App. P. 6.5.

b. If imposed by an appellate court, on or before 30 days after the date the procedendo is filed with the district court.

If such a written consent is not filed within these time periods, then the new trial imposed as the other choice shall be deemed ordered automatically.

1.1010(3) In the event of an appeal any such term or condition or judgment entered pursuant to district court order shall be deemed of no force and effect and the original judgment entered pursuant to rule 1.955 shall be deemed reinstated.

I.C.A. Rule 1.1010

VACATING OR MODIFYING JUDGMENT

RULE 1.1012 Grounds for vacating or modifying judgment

Upon timely petition and notice under rule 1.1013 the court may correct, vacate or modify a final judgment or order, or grant a new trial on any of the following grounds:

1.1012(1) Mistake, neglect or omission of the clerk.

1.1012(2) Irregularity or fraud practiced in obtaining it.

1.1012(3) Erroneous proceedings against a minor or person of unsound mind, when such errors or condition of mind do not appear in the record.

1.1012(4) Death of a party before entry of the judgment or order, and its entry without substitution of a proper representative.

1.1012(5) Unavoidable casualty or misfortune preventing the party from prosecuting or defending.

1.1012(6) Material evidence, newly discovered, which could not with reasonable diligence have been discovered and produced at the trial, and was not discovered within the time for moving for new trial under rule 1.1004.

I.C.A. Rule 1.1012

RULE 1.1013 Procedure for vacating or modifying judgment

1.1013(1) Petition. A petition for relief under rule 1.1012 must be filed and served in the original action within one year after the entry of the judgment or order involved. It shall state the grounds for relief, and, if it seeks a new trial, show that they were not and could not have been discovered in time to proceed under rule 1.977 or 1.1004. If the pleadings in the original action did not allege a meritorious action or defense the petition shall do so. It shall be supported by affidavit as provided in rule 1.413(3).

1.1013(2) Notice. The petitioner must serve the adverse party with an original notice and petition in the manner provided in rules 1.301 through 1.315, located in division III of the rules in this chapter.

1.1013(3) Trial. The court shall promptly assign the petition for trial not less than 20 days after notice is served. The petition shall stand denied without answer; otherwise the issues and pleadings, and form and manner of the trial shall be the same, as nearly as may be, as in the trial of an ordinary action to the court, and with the same right of appeal. No new claim shall be introduced.

1.1013(4) Preliminary determination. The court may try and determine the validity of the grounds to vacate or modify a judgment or order before trying the validity of the claim or defense.

1.1013(5) Judgment. If the original judgment or order is affirmed after a stay under rule 1.1006, additional judgment shall be entered against the petitioner for the costs of the trial, and also, in the court's discretion, for damages not exceeding 10 percent of the judgment affirmed.
I.C.A. Rule 1.1013