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not all accidents ARE CREATED EQUAL

Summer is here and many of us will be on the road – and so will 18 wheelers, dump trucks and moving vans. And we've all been in a car, sometimes at night, in a construction zone, or with heavy traffic and had a tractor trailer closing in on us. Or we've been squeezed between two or three of these trucks on the highway. Every driver has felt that moment of fear or panic.

That fear is justified. U.S. Federal Highway Administration statistics show that in 2008, nearly 75 percent of the 4,229 fatalities resulting from truck crashes were drivers or passengers in cars that were involved in a collision with

a truck. With the average weight of a Honda Accord around 3,300 pounds and a loaded freight carrier or big rig that can weigh in at 70,000 pounds or more, the results of a big truck crash can be catastrophic.

Most people don't know that trucking companies often have separate insurance policies representing the tractor, the trailer, and the driver. Since most trucks are owned by large corporations, injured victims don't just fight them, but sometimes several insurance companies as well. Do you think these companies are going to look out for the people they hurt? Or will they protect their bottom line? ■



THE DONAHOE KEARNEY, LLP ORIOLES

Like FedEx Field and Verizon Center, Donahoe Kearney became a corporate sponsor — of a tee ball team. These 5 and 6 year old ballplayers made their sponsor proud — showing speed, agility, and hustle when it came to getting the post game snacks.

tips on

ROAD ASSISTANCE

What to do when you need assistance on the road:

- Move the vehicle to the right side of the road out of the flow of traffic if possible. Stopping on the left side of a divided highway is extremely dangerous but sometimes unavoidable. Do not leave the vehicle stopped in a traffic lane.
- Show clear signs that there is a problem and you need assistance by raising the vehicle hood. This is an internationally recognized sign of distress.
- Turn on your emergency flashers and display any signs you have that indicate you need help (such as shade screens with distress messages).
- If you remain with the vehicle, another motorist will likely report your disabled vehicle to the police, and it will be easier for the police or others to provide assistance.

Be prepared for problem situations:

- Keep items in the vehicle such as flares, flashlights, blankets and a first aid kit. Mobile phones in the vehicle also become valuable safety tools during breakdown situations. In addition, have water available in hot climates, especially for children.
- Know where items such as your spare tire, jack and other tools are in the vehicle and how to use them. Check periodically to make sure they are in working order.

Be familiar with the operation of your vehicle:

- Read your owner's manual. A motorist who understands how his/her vehicle operates is better able to detect and address problems with the vehicle.
- Conduct periodic and regular maintenance of the vehicle.
- If you hear or sense that something is wrong with the vehicle, have it checked. ■



driving emergencies

Here are some tips from the South Carolina Department of Public Safety

- **Brake failure:** Try to use the engine to slow you down by downshifting to lower gears, and try the parking brake. Honk your horn to alert others there is a problem. Your parking brake may be used to slow down.
- **Flat tire:** Slow down to a stop by coasting, and do not abruptly apply brakes. Set your parking brake before attempting to change the flat tire.
- **Meeting a car in wrong lane:** Slow down and coast on to the shoulder of the roadway. Turn on lights to alert the other driver.
- **Stalled car:** Turn on emergency flashers and get out of the car if you are still in the roadway. Stand in a safe spot out of the way of traffic.
- **Wheels run off pavement:** Grip the steering wheel firmly and coast back onto the road. Do not brake or accelerate back onto the roadway.
- **Stuck accelerator:** Turn engine off, but do not lock the steering wheel. Be prepared to brake harder than usual because the power braking system will be off as well. Honk your horn to alert other motorists of the problem so they can steer clear of your vehicle. ■

the key to choosing AN ATTORNEY



If you know someone who has been hurt at work, due to medical malpractice, or in a serious accident, one of the best things you can

do is help them get a lawyer who is right for them. Let's face it, if you don't know an attorney, finding the right one can be a challenge. There is so much worthless, confusing advertising out there, and you don't want your loved one, friend or co-worker to get stuck with some slick TV lawyer.

This is a free country and lawyers can have all the TV commercials, yellow page ads and paid internet advertising they want, but as one "TV lawyer" told me once, no one with a catastrophic injury case (a child with cerebral palsy or a family that lost a husband and father) wanted to hire his firm because they know jurors don't trust slick TV lawyers and their case was too important to risk it.

We don't advertise – not on TV, the yellow pages or any pay per click or paid adwords on the internet. And there are lots of reasons we don't. We consider it the highest compliment for our clients to refer people to us. We want to have a good, trusting working relationship with our clients. And we're selective – we never want our clients to feel like they are part of some high volume client mill.

Here are 3 keys to finding the right attorney for your loved one, friend or co-worker.

- 1. Experience.** How often does the lawyer handle these types of cases? You can spot someone who doesn't have the experience or is trying to fake it pretty darn quickly. Is he or she able to answer your questions – and does the lawyer ask you if you have any questions or concerns about the case.
- 2. Board certification.** The National Board of Trial Advocacy certifies trial attorneys, who have the experience to be eligible, on the basis of the number of cases tried, recommendations from judges, recommendations from opposing lawyers, and the results of an all day examination to name a few. Only about 1% of lawyers are Board Certified.
- 3. Problem solving.** This is the most important. Can the lawyer help to solve the problem? Sometimes the problem seems overwhelming – a serious injury, being out of work, needing medical treatment, not having any income, future medical care for a child. And it all comes down to this: Can the lawyer help?

There are a lot of search sites and paid advertising out there, but nothing beats getting as much information as you can, learning about the lawyer, the cases he or she has had, the qualifications, and especially, how the lawyer can help your loved one, friend or co-worker. ■

FAQ



I was involved in an accident and the insurance adjuster said I should just handle the claim myself and not hire an attorney to represent me. Is that what I should do?

Our advice is always that if you or a loved one has a serious injury where you can't feed your family because you can't work, or you need significant medical treatment, get a lawyer to protect your rights. Early in my career I represented insurance companies and I know they have one goal: maximizing their profits by paying as little as possible on any claims.

Having an experienced, Board Certified attorney on your side helps protect your rights, gives you leverage negotiating with the insurance company (because of a lawsuit or the threat of one), and greatly increases your chances of receiving fair compensation for your injuries. Insurance industry studies consistently show that injury victims represented by an attorney receive more compensation than those who do not. ■

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accidents



NOT TREATED THE SAME

SEE PAGE ONE.

This publication is intended to educate the general public about workers compensation, medical malpractice, personal injury and other issues. It is for information purposes only and is not intended to be legal advice. Prior to acting on any information contained here, you should seek and retain competent counsel. The information in this newsletter may be freely copied and distributed as long as the newsletter is copied in its entirety.

how do you handle a car accident?



Because of unsafe drivers, (drinking and driving, driving while texting, speeding---you've seen it all on the Beltway, 270, I-95, even your own neighborhood) car wrecks are a reality in today's society. Having represented accident victims for many years, in our experience, as you can imagine, most people are confused and unsure about what to do immediately after an accident.

Here's a short checklist for clients and friends.

After the collision you should:

- Stay calm (easier said than done).
- Check for injuries (but don't move someone who was seriously injured unless they're in further danger because of traffic or other circumstances).
- Call the police.

- Get medical attention as soon as possible.
- Get the key information (license plate, insurance, address, phone number, type of car, etc.) from every driver involved and all witnesses.
- Do not give a recorded statement or sign any paperwork with the other side's insurance company.
- Do not admit fault.
- Document everything you can. Take pictures of the cars and intersection.
- Let your insurance company know about the accident even if it was not your fault.
- Call if you have any questions or need help. ■

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