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Brooks, Africa & Heat Safety

By the time you're reading this, I'll be in Liberia and Guinea for a mission trip. As you might suspect, I'm nervous about several things (new places, the 1000 diseases they warned me I could contract when I was getting my vaccinations, etc.).

But the one thing that I have been repeatedly warned about is the heat. We'll have highs in the 90s and just short of 100% humidity — Houston on steroids — and little to no air conditioning to fight it.

As a reminder to me and to all of you, I thought I'd include some heat safety tips in this newsletter.

Those tips are as follows:

SUNBURN: The number one summer ailment in Austin has to be sunburn. Make sure to limit your exposure to peak sun, use sunscreen, and keep covered. If you experience a sunburn, remember that ibuprofen or aspirin can help relieve the pain. You can also use moisturizing cream and cold compresses/washcloths as long as the skin isn't blistering. If the skin does have significant blistering, seek medical care.

HEAT EXHAUSTION: We all hope this summer won't be as bad as last summer, but even in a "typical" Austin summer, heat exhaustion is a concern.

Remember to drink plenty of liquids and modify your activities as the weather requires. But most importantly, be aware of the signs of heat exhaustion. Common symptoms include:

- You quit sweating. If heat stroke sets in, your body can't compensate and you quit sweating.
- Pale skin.
- Muscle cramps.
- Confusion or disorientation.
- Headaches.
- Nausea or vomiting.

If you or a friend experience heat exhaustion, know what to do. Get to a cooler area, apply water to the person (or immerse them in a cool pool or bathtub), and apply ice to neck or armpits. If the symptoms are severe enough, call 911.

Hopefully, I'll remember these tips and they'll keep me out of trouble on my adventure to Africa, and maybe they'll help you too.

By the way, if you're interested in following my trip, you can watch for updates on my Facebook page (www.facebook.com/brooks.schuelke) or the page of our group (www.facebook.com/AustinMethodistMatters).

— Brooks Schuelke

Do Personal Injury Lawyers Make A Difference?

One of my favorite parts of a case is disbursement time — when we give our clients their checks from settlements or trials.

This month, I was making a disbursement in a settlement of a car wreck case, and the case is a good example of how personal injury lawyers can help those making claims.

Before his hiring of me, the insurance company for the other driver had offered the client \$924.12 to settle the case. I do not want to disclose the amounts that we settled for, but both the insurance company for the other driver and my client's underinsured motorist insurance company both paid the maximum amounts of coverage they had under the policy. Needless to say, these were much, much more than \$924.12.

Obviously, this is an extreme case. But I'm seeing more and more insurance companies try to settle claims directly with clients for ridiculous amounts. It scares me to think that many accident victims naively accept these amounts.

If you or a loved one is injured in a wreck or through any other way, at least talk to an injury attorney to make sure the insurance company isn't taking advantage of you.



Fireworks Safety

This July 4th Season, don't let you, your children, or your friends become victims of fireworks injuries. Follow these recommendations from the CPSC:

- Never allow young children to play with or ignite fireworks.
- Avoid buying fireworks that are packaged in brown paper because this is often a sign that the fireworks were made for professional displays and that they could pose a danger to consumers.
- Always have an adult supervise fireworks activities. Parents don't realize that young children suffer injuries from sparklers. **Sparklers burn at temperatures of about 2,000 degrees – hot enough to melt some metals.**
- Never place any part of your body directly over a fireworks device when lighting the fuse. Back up to a safe distance immediately after lighting fireworks.
- Never try to re-light or pick up fireworks that have not ignited fully.
- Never point or throw fireworks at another person.
- Keep a bucket of water or a garden hose handy in case of fire or other mishap.
- Light fireworks one at a time, then move back quickly.



Congratulations to Brooks



In June, Brooks was elected Vice-President/President-Elect of the Capital Area Trial Lawyers Association (CATLA). CATLA is the largest association of trial lawyers in Austin.

Brooks is proud to have been elected to his post. He is a strong believer in the idea that all attorneys who represent accident victims in lawsuits should be members of the Texas Trial Lawyers Association and their local trial

lawyers groups.

CATLA members are generally unique in their willingness to share and help one another out. While we are “competitors” in the sense that we all do the same thing, members generally do whatever they can to help one another succeed.

CATLA provides formal continuing education courses to help our attorneys stay on top of the law. Additionally, most CATLA lawyers participate in a very vibrant listserv, where lawyers share ideas, thoughts on cases, experiences before judges, etc. That participation makes us all better lawyers and helps us represent our clients better.

South Texas Oil Boom Creating Trucking Dangers

In the first two weekends of June, I had to make working trips to the Texas coast (and I didn’t even see the beach on either trip). The one thing that struck me on the drives was the increase in traffic, especially trucking traffic.

That’s why it didn’t surprise me to see the headline in the Sunday (June 10) Corpus Christi Caller Times describing the increased number of commercial vehicle wrecks resulting from the South Texas oil boom. Generally, from 2008 to 2011, the number of wrecks in the State of Texas actually decreased. But in the 11 Eagle Ford Shale counties, commercial vehicle wrecks (mostly trucking accidents) more than doubled.

Three counties have been hit particularly hard. In McMullen County, they had four commercial vehicle wrecks in 2008, and 48 in 2011. Karnes County went from five wrecks to 77 wrecks during the same years, and LaSalle County went from 60 to 187.

These eleven counties are also seeing an increase in traffic fatalities.

While a lot of the responsibility for the increased accidents lies at the feet of the truckers, drivers in these areas have to be safe too. If you’re driving there, you need to be aware of risks, be patient — don’t pass in no passing zones, and drive defensively.

We’re starting to investigate some of these accidents. Hopefully you and your loved ones remain safe, but if they are unfortunate enough to be involved in an accident, please have them call us and we’ll try to help.



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This newsletter is informational and not legal advice. If you need legal advice, feel free to call us to set up a consultation.

THANKS AGAIN FOR YOUR REFERRALS

As many of you know, making a claim with an insurance company or another claims adjusting firm can be complicated. That's why we work hard to make sure that our clients aren't taken advantage of during their stressful times. Obviously, we're biased, but we think we provide a very important service that really helps people.

We thank those of you who have recognized the important value and service we bring to our clients and who have referred potential clients to us. If you have a family member, friend or other acquaintance injured in a car wreck or other accident, we hope you'll continue to refer those individuals to our firm to allow us the opportunity to help them.