

**SUMMER  
2008**

# **POTHITAKIS LAW FIRM, P.C.**

**A t t o r n e y   A t   L a w**

Brought to you by  
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#### **OFFICE HOURS**

Monday-Friday  
8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

#### **PRACTICE IS PRIMARILY PERSONAL INJURY AND WORKERS' COMPENSATION**

- Free consultation
- Contingency fee available
- Board member,  
Workers' Compensation  
Section of the Iowa State  
Board Association  
(2000-2002)
- Board member,  
Iowa Association of  
Workers' Compensation  
Lawyers, Inc. (2005-2008)
- Board of Governors,  
Iowa Trial Lawyers  
Association (2006-2007)
- Member, American Trial  
Lawyers Association

## **Recent success for a Pothitakis Law Firm, P.C. client**

In the state of Iowa, an injured employee can seek workers' compensation benefits for work injuries not only from their employer, but also from what is called the "Second Injury Fund." The Second Injury Fund in the state of Iowa is a state fund that provides additional benefits to individuals who have previously had an injury (work-related or not) to their hand, arm, foot, leg, or eye and later sustained an additional work injury to their hand, arm, foot, leg, or eye. An experienced workers' compensation attorney will evaluate all injuries to these body parts and determine if a Second Injury Fund claim is available.

One case that illustrates this would be a claim that was recently successfully litigated by **Pothitakis Law Firm, P.C.** W.T. was an individual who sustained a work-related injury in March of 2006 to his right knee. In the initial interview process with W.T., it was determined that he had previously sustained an injury to his left leg. This prior injury was not a work-related injury.

As the case progressed, the employer for the March 2006 injury agreed to provide the benefits that were due under the Iowa Workers' Compensation statute. Under the Iowa Workers' Compensation statute, W.T. was entitled to 81.4 weeks of benefits as a result of his right knee injury and permanency. This entitled him to approximately \$30,000. A settlement was reached with the employer for the payment of this amount. This would have been W.T.'s total entitlement to benefits under the Iowa workers' compensation statute if he had not had a previous condition with respect to his opposite left leg.

Because of his prior left leg injury, the

Pothitakis Law Firm developed evidence and filed a formal claim against the Second Injury Fund with the Iowa Workers' Compensation Commissioner. **Pothitakis Law Firm** argued on behalf of W.T. that because he now had two legs with

permanent injuries, he should receive benefits from the Second Injury Fund. The Pothitakis Law Firm argued that he should receive permanent total disability benefits or weekly benefits for the remainder of his life from the Second Injury Fund because of his two leg injuries.

Shortly before the hearing, the Second Injury Fund's attorney contacted Pothitakis Law Firm and made an offer to settle the Second Injury Fund claim for \$15,000. Based upon discussions between W.T. and Pothitakis Law Firm, the offer was rejected, and the claimant proceeded to a hearing before an Iowa Deputy Workers' Compensation Commissioner. Evidence was submitted, including multiple medical records, vocational reports, and the testimony of the claimant and his spouse.

On April 4, 2008, a decision was issued by the Deputy Workers' Compensation Commissioner awarding the claimant permanent total disability benefits, entitling him to benefits for the remainder of his life. The present value of this award to the claimant is worth approximately \$275,000.

As illustrated above, it is very important for injured workers to seek the services of an experienced workers' compensation attorney so that all avenues of recovery can be reviewed and evaluated.

*The Second Injury Fund in the state of Iowa is a state fund that provides additional benefits to individuals who have previously had an injury (work-related or not) to their hand, arm, foot, leg, or eye and later sustained an additional work injury to their hand, arm, foot, leg, or eye.*

*We take pride in the quality of our legal work.*

# WHAT IS A *Trial lawyer?*

Trial lawyers help obtain access to our civil justice system for the powerless in America—working families, individual workers, and consumers who often lack the resources to take their grievances to court.

Trial lawyers play a valuable role in protecting the rights of American families. They champion the causes of those who deserve redress for injury to their person or property; they promote the public good through their efforts to secure safer products, a safe workplace, a clean environment, and quality health care; they uphold the rule of law and protect the rights of the accused; and they preserve the constitutional right to trial by jury and seek justice for all.

*The kinds of cases that trial attorneys handle include:*



• *A child paralyzed after being struck by a drunk driver.*



• *A young woman unable to have children because of a medical mistake.*



• *A person denied a promotion because of racial discrimination.*



• *A community whose water was made toxic by a local manufacturer.*



• *An elderly man mistreated in a nursing home.*



## Auto accidents

### **PARKING BRAKES**

Vehicle parking-brake systems usually work well. But like most other automobile elements, design, manufacture, and poor maintenance can lead to malfunction. Driver, passenger, or pedestrian injury or property damage may result.

Here are some instances:

**2005—Toyota** recalled more than 20,000 Tacoma trucks with ineffective parking brakes.

**2005—Owners of General Motors** cars, trucks, and SUVs filed a national class-action lawsuit after being charged to replace defective parking brakes.

**2004—Hyundai Motor Co.** recalled minivans with defective parking-brake cables.

**2004—Jaguar Motor Company** recalled vehicles with electronic sensors that locked parking brakes while cars were moving.

If you or someone you know has sustained a personal injury or property damage from a parking-brake incident, consider obtaining legal counsel.

## Jury duty *and* **TELEPHONE FRAUD**



The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has warned the public against an ongoing scam involving jury duty.

Unscrupulous individuals identifying themselves as court employees have been phoning victims, telling them they have been selected for jury duty. Callers then ask for verification of social security numbers, credit-card numbers, and passwords. When those who are called hesitate, callers allegedly threaten with civil fines, or worse.

Members of our judicial system never phone and ask for compromising financial information that can be used to defraud consumers.

Anyone who has been contacted or who gave out confidential information should contact local law enforcement, the local FBI office, banks, credit-card issuers, and other financial services.

# FOR YOUR SAFETY

## Recalled product roundup

Here are some recently recalled products you may have in your home or at work:

- ✓ **Connecticut Electric & Switch Mfg. Co.** has recalled 64,000 counterfeit “Square D” Circuit Breakers, which may fail to operate properly and burn consumers.
- ✓ **Target Stores** has asked buyers to return 40,000 Home Patio Sets. Weakened front-end arm rests can collapse and injure users.
- ✓ **Bumbo International**, a South African firm, has recalled 1 million “Baby Sitter” Seats. If placed on elevated surfaces, the seats may allow children to arch their backs, flip out of the seat, fall to the floor, and suffer serious head injuries.
- ✓ **Alltrade Tools, LLC**, wants 800,000 battery chargers supplied with certain Kawasaki Power Tool Kits returned. If used with incompatible chargers, battery packs can overheat, melt, or explode, bruising, lacerating, or burning users.
- ✓ **Dunkin’ Donuts, LLC**, has recalled 1 million free-giveaway Pink and Orange Glow Sticks. Caps and lanyards can detach and choke or strangle young children.
- ✓ **Huffy Corp.** has voluntarily called back 22,000 2007 Huffy “Howler” and “Highland” bicycles, whose pedal cranks can unexpectedly detach and harm riders.



## TEEN DRIVERS

### Trust but verify

Although parents do their best to see that family teenage drivers are well-trained, teens remain a high-risk category.

Why? Newly licensed teen

drivers are still in the process of learning good driving skills.

Teens often underestimate hazards and take risks. Further, young drivers may be distracted by friends in the vehicle or by talking or messaging on cell phones while driving.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, for each mile they drive, teenage drivers aged 16 to 19 are four times more likely than older drivers to have an auto accident.

### Protect your young drivers

Parents can take a number of steps to safeguard teen drivers:

1. Let them know you can always pick them up anywhere, anytime, day or night.
2. Set rules for nighttime or weekend driving.
3. Have parties at your home to keep teens off roads during high-accident times.
4. Make teens promise to always wear seat belts.
5. Restrict passengers to one or two other teens.
6. Make teens promise not to use a cell phone while driving.
7. Drive with teens to monitor their driving habits.
8. Serve as a good driving role model.
9. Have teens pay for their driver’s insurance.
10. Keep any vehicle teens drive well-maintained.



## Ultrasound drug CAUTION

### Echocardiography

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has warned physicians that two drugs used in cardiac ultrasound diagnosis may cause cardiopulmonary complications and death.

Definity® and Optison®, called contrast agents, use minute gas-filled bubbles to bring cardiac ultrasound images into sharper focus during echocardiography.

Should preliminary cardiac testing be inconclusive, physicians may inject these drugs during testing procedures to obtain better cardiac images for diagnosis of cardiac malfunctions and defects.

The FDA, which received reports of serious cardiopulmonary reactions and deaths following injections of these medical products, has asked the manufacturers to update the drugs’ labels to warn doctors about using the drugs on patients with specific cardiac conditions, and to carefully monitor patients for half an hour after administering the drug.

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The information included in this newsletter is not intended as a substitute for professional legal advice. For your specific situation, please consult the appropriate legal professional.

## THE "litigation crisis" MYTH

Are greedy plaintiffs filing lawsuits as though they were money machines? Do we have a national litigation crisis? No, we do not.

Our civil justice system and conscientious jurors serving at state trial courts don't tolerate "out-of-control" lawsuits.

- At trials, fair median damage awards granted by juries have decreased 56 percent since 1992, down from \$64,000 to \$28,000.
- In state courthouses, jurors are cautious about punitive damages, granting such awards in about only six percent of all cases.
- Jurors are watchful. They reduced award amounts for 16 percent of plaintiffs who won jury trials.
- In a third of all premises-liability cases, juries reduced awards by about 42 percent due to plaintiff negligence.
- When states recognize potential plaintiff negligence, juries reduced damages by 14 percent in lawsuit cases.

## *Our commitment to clients*

Clients who use our legal services mean everything to our law firm.

That's why our promise to each client is to always do our best every time we provide legal assistance.

- Our firm is committed to providing clients the highest-quality legal services at competitive rates.
- We always treat our clients with respect and appreciation.
- If we cannot speak with clients when they call, we return calls the same day.
- We always provide copies of all pleadings and correspondence.
- Our lawyers stay in touch with clients to keep them informed of the developments in their legal matters.
- We provide prompt processing of pleadings and document preparation.
- Attorneys apply their professional experience, legal resources, and knowledge to deliver value-added legal services.

This is our commitment to our clients.

## AUTO ACCIDENTS

### FAILURE TO MAINTAIN LANE

Drivers and passengers may suffer auto-accident injuries when other vehicles fail to stay on their side of the road. What causes these "failure to maintain lane" accidents?

Rainy, snowy, or icy weather is one reason. Faulty brakes, nonfunctioning windshield wipers, and bald tires are among other reasons. Even roadway design or maintenance may create conditions that cause drivers to lose control of their vehicles.

Negligent drivers cause many accidents due to inattention, roadside distractions, or fatigue. Additional reasons are driving too fast for conditions, driving too aggressively, or driving while impaired.

### *A head-on collision*

A driver suffered multiple hip and leg fractures, nerve injuries of the back, and severe pain when a courier delivery truck crossed the center line and crashed head-on into his pickup truck. This victim's medical and rehabilitation expenses totaled more than \$2 million. He sued the delivery driver and his employer for negligence and failure to maintain lane. The parties settled for an undisclosed amount.