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The Complexities of School Bus Accident Claims

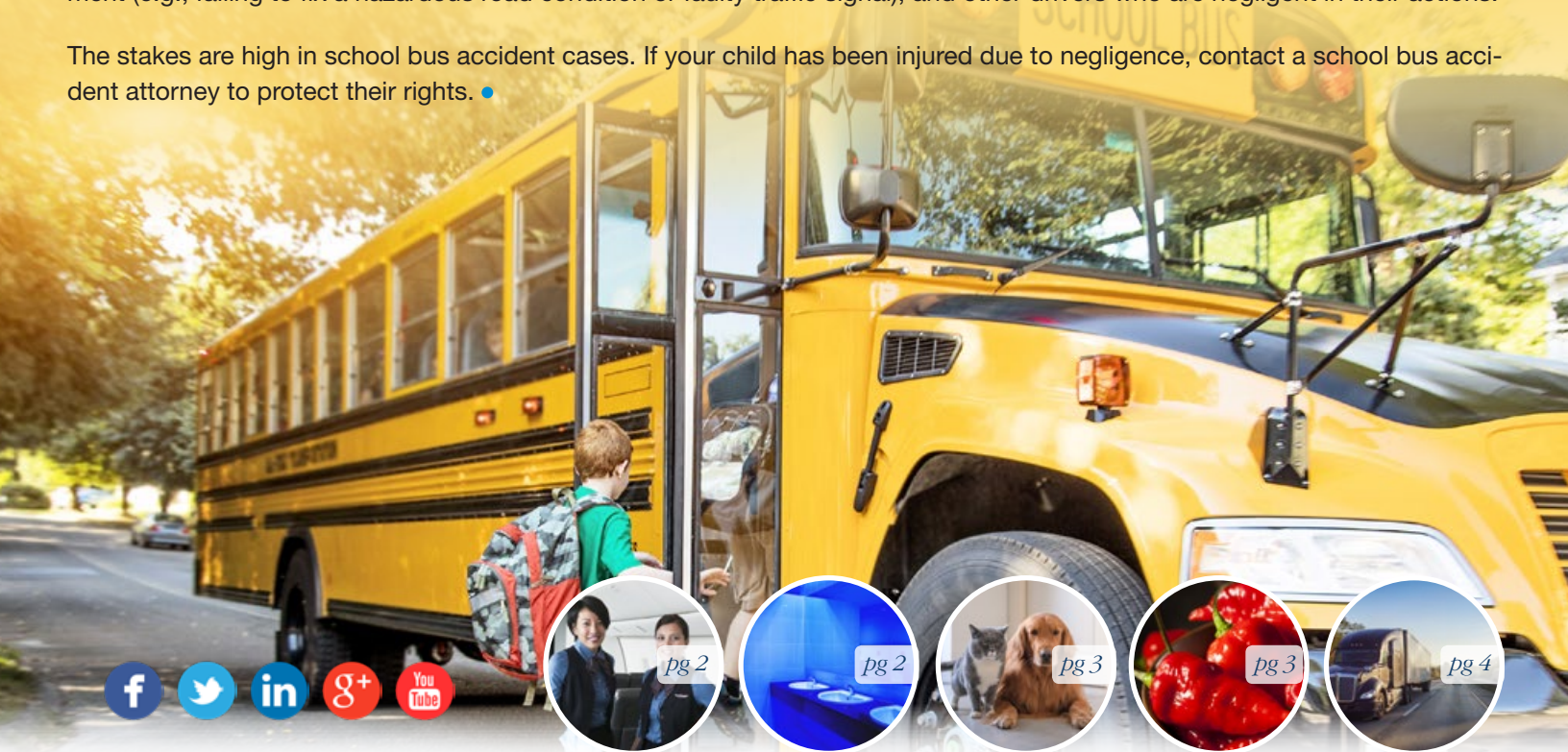
For children injured in school bus accidents for which the school district may be at fault, liability and compensation issues can be trickier than normal. For example, a public school is considered part of the local government. Because a government entity is involved, you are required to send the school district—within a short time frame—a “notice of claim,” which alerts them to your claim and offers them a chance to respond. If they deny your claim (likely), you are free to file a lawsuit in civil court to recover compensation. In addition, recovery may be limited, and punitive damages are generally off the table.

A school district is typically responsible for the actions of its employees. However, if a school bus driver is found guilty of an egregious action, such as driving under the influence, he/she may be fully liable for damages. If the school district had prior knowledge of similar incidents, they may share liability.

When a private transportation company is hired by a school district to bus students, the company may be responsible for all injuries sustained in an accident, or at least partially responsible. School bus owners must also properly inspect, repair, and maintain their vehicles.

Other potential liable parties in a school bus crash include manufacturers of defective vehicle parts; the local or state government (e.g., failing to fix a hazardous road condition or faulty traffic signal); and other drivers who are negligent in their actions.

The stakes are high in school bus accident cases. If your child has been injured due to negligence, contact a school bus accident attorney to protect their rights. •



Flight Attendants May Be More Susceptible to Cancer



A recent study seems to indicate that U.S. flight attendants have a higher risk of certain cancers compared with the general population. The Harvard Flight Attendant Health Study compared the data of more than 5,300 flight attendants with that of 2,700 persons with similar educational and income backgrounds.

The rates of numerous cancers were higher for flight attendants, including breast, skin, thyroid, cervix, uterus, and gastrointestinal cancers. Various factors may be responsible for the significant statistical disparities.

One possible piece of the puzzle is prolonged exposure to cosmic ionizing radiation, which is elevated at higher altitudes. Cosmic ionizing radiation emanates from outer space. Most of it never reaches the earth's surface, but it's a factor at high altitude. A cell that has been ionized either dies from the radiation, suffers damage but successfully repairs itself, or suffers damage and mutates, which can lead to cancer.

Ultraviolet radiation is also more intense at higher altitudes, which can increase the incidence of skin cancer if proper skin protection is not utilized.

Cabin air quality may also play a role. Chemical contaminants from engine leakage, pesticides, and flame retardants, among other sources, can disrupt hormonal balance and increase the threat of cancer.

Circadian rhythm disturbances due to jet lag and working odd shifts might be involved, too. The immune system and cell metabolism are disrupted, which can open the door to tumor development.

Although the study centered on flight attendants, it stands to reason that pilots would be similarly affected. Passengers who are frequent fliers might be more vulnerable to various cancers as well. •

September 2018 Notable Dates

September 3 – Labor Day **September 10** – Rosh Hashanah (begins at sunset, Sept. 9)
September 11 – Patriot Day **September 19** – Yom Kippur (begins at sunset, Sept. 18)
September 22 – First Day of Autumn



Businesses Using Blue Lights to Discourage Opioid Use

Some businesses have begun using blue lights to discourage the injection of heroin and other opioids in their restrooms. The idea is that the blue light makes it more difficult for users to see their veins and will force them to go elsewhere.

Public restrooms at convenience stores, supermarkets, big-box stores, and fast-food restaurants are becoming popular haunts for opioid addicts to shoot up quickly to avoid the nasty withdrawal symptoms associated with opioid usage. They're isolated, easily accessible, and free of security cameras. But incidents of customers and employees finding dirty hypodermic needles scattered about and people passed out—or dead—from overdoses have become commonplace in some areas, prompting business owners to take action.

Early results have been encouraging. Two convenience-store chains, Turkey Hill Minit Markets and Sheetz, have reported dramatic reductions in restroom opioid incidents since installing blue lights in some store restrooms in late 2017.

Opponents of the blue-light experiment believe that desperate opioid users will still inject themselves, even in poor lighting, to avoid withdrawal symptoms. They contend that blue light will make the situation even more dangerous and stigmatize those in the grip of addiction. They also fear that some users might seek quick opioid fixes at less discreet places, such as playgrounds or parks.

The opioid epidemic has devastated many families from every region of the country and all strata of society. Businesses have been affected, too, and many are seeking to strike the right balance between being open and inviting to their customers while maintaining their health and safety. •

Dog-Cat Intelligence Debate— *Science Renders a Verdict*



An article published recently in the journal *Frontiers in Neuroanatomy* covers research over the past 10 years that measured the cognitive function of land mammals by counting neurons from the brain's cerebral cortex. Neurons are basic information processing units. The cerebral cortex is the outside layer of the brain that collects sensory information from outside stimuli and weaves it together to drive decision-making and problem-solving.

In the past, an animal's intelligence was determined by brain size and structural complexity, which were somewhat controversial. For instance, two animals from different species can have similarly sized brains but widely varying intelligence. Researchers involved in the *Frontiers* study believe that counting neurons from the brain's cerebral cortex provides a more accurate rendering of an animal's intelligence.

Although many land-based mammals were studied, let's skip to the dog-cat intelligence matchup. The brains of a cat, a golden retriever, and a small mixed-breed dog were used in the study. Two dog brains were studied since dogs can vary greatly in size. Despite the size gap, each dog possessed approximately 500 million neurons. The cat weighed in with roughly 250 million neurons. So according to this study, dogs are twice as intelligent as cats.

In case you were curious, humans have an estimated 16 billion neurons per person. The silver medal goes to orangutans and gorillas, at 8–9 billion. Dogs are on par with raccoons and lions; cats are on the level of bears.

If dogs could comprehend science's verdict, they'd likely be ecstatic. Cats, on the other hand, probably couldn't care less. •



Ghost Peppers . . . Be Careful What You're Dealing With

Ghost peppers have a storied reputation. According to the Scoville heat scale, ghost peppers are over 300 times hotter than jalapeños and five times as fiery as orange habaneros. Amazingly, a handful of chilis are even hotter.

The compound that gives ghost peppers their scorching heat is capsaicin. It attaches to pain receptors whose job is to send temperature information to the brain. The mouth's temperature does not actually rise (it just feels that way), but the brain is fooled and

triggers a cooling response: perspiration and dilated capillaries, which reddens the face. In response to capsaicin, the body also stimulates mucous, salivary, and tear glands, resulting in watery eyes, a runny nose, and a digestive system eager to defend itself.

Before cooking with ghost peppers, keep in mind that capsaicin is an active ingredient in military-grade pepper spray. If you're still not deterred, these guidelines may help:

- Read up on ghost peppers before proceeding.
- Wear gloves, long sleeves, goggles, and a kitchen mask—the whole nine yards—when handling ghost peppers. The oils can cause intense chili burn and be transferred if you're not careful.
- Use only tiny amounts of ghost pepper. Get a feel for it with simple recipes before graduating to more exotic dishes.
- Label all leftovers with a bold warning to others (and yourself). Homemade salsas and hot sauces will get even hotter with age.
- Milk can help alleviate the burning sensation caused by ghost peppers. Avoid water.

Ghost peppers can cause extreme discomfort if not prepared carefully. Nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, and burning diarrhea are distinct possibilities.

Bon appétit! •

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A Trucker's Perspective

Most car and light-truck drivers do not drive tractor-trailers and may not be aware of the driving challenges truckers face. Here are a few things truck drivers want other drivers to know to improve roadway safety for everyone.

Trucks use air brakes, which differ significantly from a car's hydraulic brakes. When a trucker hits the brakes, air needs to build up and reach every area of the truck before braking kicks in, amounting to a slight lag time. That increases a truck's stopping distance and time, as does its weight, which can be as much as 20 times more than a car's. Give truckers the space they need to operate safely.

Tractor-trailers need room to make right-hand turns. If a truck has its right turn signal on but is veering to the left, the driver is creating the angle to successfully navigate the turn, not inviting the car behind it to squeeze by on the right.

A truck's blind spots are larger than you might realize due to the length and height of the truck, and the lack of a center rear-view mirror. Don't follow too closely, and don't meander alongside one. If you are passing, do it quickly.

When merging onto a highway, vehicles on the on-ramp must yield—even if it means coming to a complete stop. Truckers will try to move over one lane if it's safe to do so to accommodate a merging vehicle, but it's not always possible. Do not cut in front of them.

The goal is for trucks and cars to safely coexist on the roadways. That's more easily done if everyone is on the same page. ●

