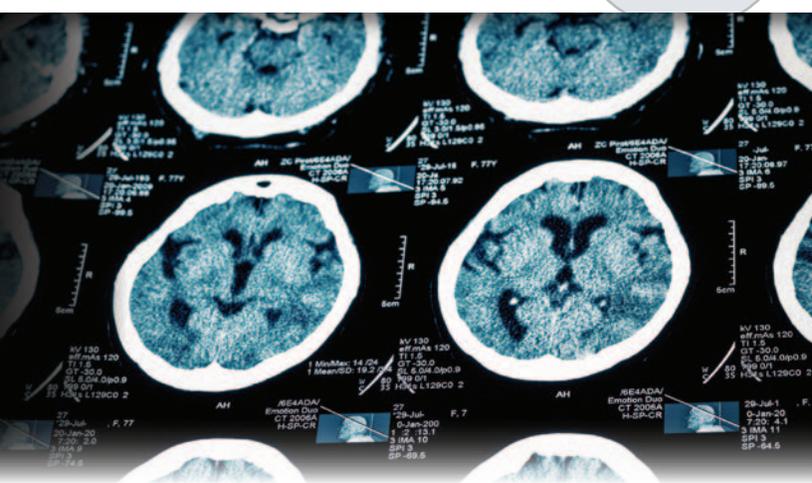




The Road to Justice Starts Here

Auto Accidents and Traumatic Brain Injuries



Traumatic brain injuries (TBI) are responsible for the deaths of approximately 50,000 Americans each year and the hospitalizations of roughly 230,000 more. Many more victims go undiagnosed.

Auto accidents are one of the leading causes of TBI. Most TBIs are closed head injuries, which means that trauma sets the brain in motion inside the skull. The brain gets slammed against the interior surface of the skull, resulting in contusions and swelling.

Trauma can also initiate rotational forces that twist and stretch the brain, which can damage axons. Brain neurons send messages via electrical impulses; axons are the carriers of these impulses. When axons are damaged, brain function is diminished.

A condition called diffuse axonal injury (DAI) occurs on a cellular level and leaves blood vessels and major brain structures intact. This type of damage cannot be detected by MRIs or CT scans, making DAI vastly underdiagnosed and undertreated.

Brain injuries are unlike injuries to other parts of the body. They not only have a physical component, they also affect the cognitive and emotional well-being of the victim. Impairments can be temporary or permanent, subtle or catastrophic.

It's important to note that low-impact auto accidents can result in TBI (e.g., concussion due to whiplash), not just high-impact ones. In addition, a person involved in a car crash may feel perfectly normal immediately following the incident; however, TBI symptoms might only present themselves hours, days, or weeks later.

If you have been involved in a car accident caused by the negligence of another driver, contact our office for a free consultation. •



April 2016 News



Legal Question of the Month



Vicki Koutsogiannis, Esq.

My step-daughter visits with her father (my wife's ex-husband) every other weekend. This was decided in my wife's divorce case from three years ago. Lately my wife and I have become concerned about her ex-husband's drinking and the overall environment in that home. We also have learned that he is friendly with a man who is a registered sex-offender. My wife and I have talked and decided that we aren't going to let her go with her father for visitation anymore. What do we need to do to make sure that this is legal?

This month's answer comes from attorney Vicki Koutsogiannis:

In order to stop the visitation you will need to file a petition with the Family Court. Because there is a court order in place granting the visitation, if you fail to get the court's permission first then your wife could be held in contempt of court and face a punishment (fine, community service or even jail).

After you file the petition, a judge will consider all of the facts and circumstances to determine if it is appropriate to stop or require visitation to be supervised. The judge may continue to allow visitation, but might specify that the father not be allowed to consume alcohol during the visitation period or expose the child to the sex-offender friend.

Because it is important that your wife stay in compliance with the court order, but to also do everything you can to ensure the child is safe, you will need to hire a lawyer to assist with this process.

Do you have a legal question that you'd like to see answered here? E-mail it to jamesnell@snelllaw.com. If your question is used you will receive a \$25 Starbucks gift certificate. This month's question comes from William in Hollywood, South Carolina. •



Zika Virus Targets Unborn Children

Unborn children bear the brunt of the effects of the Zika virus, which has been declared an international public-health emergency. The virus is transmitted primarily by mosquito bites. In rare cases, it may be transmitted through sexual contact.

Zika is insidious. Roughly 80 percent of those infected exhibit no symptoms. Those who do may experience fever, headache, rash, and/or pinkeye. The real danger is to pregnant women—more specifically, the growing babies they're carrying. Zika is believed to be the source of microcephaly, a neurological disorder that causes babies to be born with abnormally small heads. The condition results in developmental issues and sometimes death.

Zika has spread to at least 29 countries, and the World Health Organization estimates that 3–4 million people across the Americas will be infected over the next year. The first outbreak of Zika in the Americas was recorded in Brazil in May 2015. Several travel-related cases have been reported in the United States.

There is currently no vaccine or treatment for Zika. Work on a vaccine is ongoing and intensive, but one won't be ready for at least several years. Avoid traveling to countries with active infestation, take mosquito protection measures (e.g., long pants, long sleeves, repellent, and sleeping in screened rooms, etc.) in active areas, and eliminate pooling of stagnant water to reduce the risk.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends discussing strategies to prevent unintended pregnancies in the context of Zika. It's also requesting that OB/GYNs review fetal ultrasounds and offer testing to women who may have become pregnant during their travels to countries with active Zika, or shortly thereafter. •





Flint, Michigan Might Just Be the Tip of the Iceberg

Aging lead pipes; a switch to a more corrosive water source; failure to utilize proper water additives to minimize corrosion; and government mismanagement all played roles in the Flint, Mich., waterborne lead-poisoning tragedy. Residents have been left in a bind and are potentially facing assorted, serious health consequences.

On top of that, nearly all major metropolitan areas of the Northeast, Midwest, and California have aging lead pipes, with some as old as 150+ years. While the circumstances may differ somewhat from Flint's disaster, lead poisoning is a substantial threat in these areas.

Though the toxic qualities of lead have been well-known in the United States since the inception of lead water pipes in the 1800s, it took until 1991 for any restrictions to lead levels in water to be addressed in a meaningful, legally binding way.

Replacing water piping infrastructure will be difficult, inconvenient, and enormously expensive, particularly in urban areas. Local government budgets are simply overwhelmed. Most cities fix water infrastructure on a piecemeal basis. When one section breaks down, that section gets replaced. A health-related drawback to that approach is that removing one lead pipe may lead to increased leaching of lead from neighboring pipes.

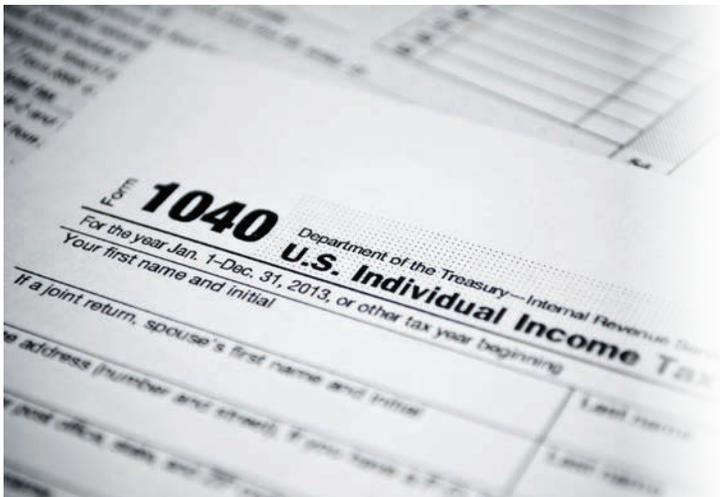
Some municipalities are imposing infrastructure fees to their water bills. Other cities are offering incentives to property owners to replace the lead piping from their homes or businesses that connect to the main water line.

While the solution to the problem may be economically painful, it might pale in comparison to doing nothing. Other Flint disasters could be coming down the line. ●

April 2016 Important Dates

- April 2**
Autism Awareness Day
- April 15**
Tax Day
- April 22**
Earth Day
- April 23**
Passover (Start)
- April 27**
Administrative Professionals' Day
- April 29**
Arbor Day
- April 30**
Passover (End)

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Did You Know?

The first U.S income tax was signed into law by President Lincoln in 1862 in order to help pay for the cost of the Civil War. The law levied a three percent tax on incomes between \$600 and \$10,000, and a five percent tax on incomes greater than \$10,000. By 1867, public opposition to the income tax persuaded Congress to cut the tax rate. Interestingly, between 1868 and 1913 (when our current income tax system was signed into law), 90 percent of all revenue came from taxes on liquor, beer, wine and tobacco. ●

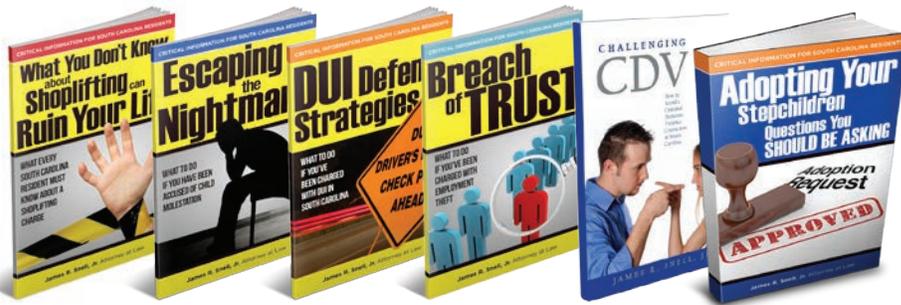


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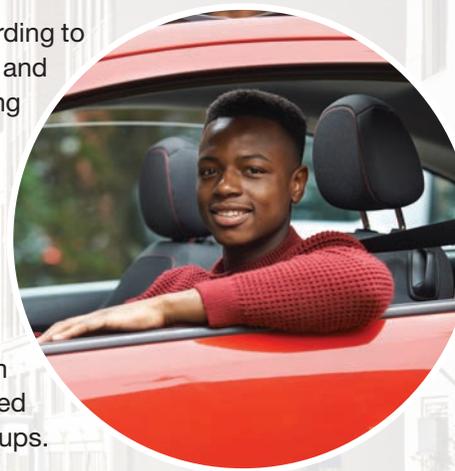
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Improving the Odds for Teen Drivers

Motor vehicle crashes are the number-one cause of death among American teenagers. According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention statistics for 2013, over 2,100 teens were killed and nearly a quarter-million required visits to hospital emergency rooms. The fatality rate for young males involved in auto accidents was almost twice that of their female counterparts.

Factors involved in heightening teenagers' susceptibility to auto collisions include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Teens are more likely to speed than older drivers and not allow for the proper following distance.
- Young drivers tend to underestimate dangerous situations or fail to recognize them at all more so than older drivers, which points to their inexperience and/or distracted driving—also more of a problem with young drivers (ages 16–20) than other age groups.
- Alcohol elevates the risk of accidents for all age groups, but in a disproportionate way for young drivers.
- The level of seat-belt usage is lower for teenage drivers.



Many auto accident fatalities and injuries can be avoided. Parents can help by setting a good example; being dutiful driving teachers and exposing their kids to a wide variety of driving situations; restricting nighttime driving (for at least the first six months); hammering home the importance of seat belts; emphasizing the consequences of distracted driving and limiting the number of passengers to one (if any) until they're more experienced; and instituting a zero-tolerance policy for drunk driving.

If you or a loved one has been injured in a car accident due to the fault of another, contact our office for a free consultation. •