



FEATURED STORY:

Learning to Let Go

First day of third grade, continuing our annual back-to-school tradition.



A few weeks ago, I walked my kids to school for their first day of third grade. We have a tradition of taking the same picture outside the school doors every year, and looking at them this year, I could not help but think back to those earlier pictures. They are getting bigger, more independent, and more capable every year.

It also reminded me of something I am still working on as a parent and frankly, as a business owner: letting go.

I have always tended to want things done a certain way. Sometimes it is because I think I can do something better or faster myself. Other times, it is simply because teaching someone else takes time. At home, it can be easier to do something for the kids than to ask them to do it, watch them struggle, and potentially clean up the mess afterward.



A look back at the kids in kindergarten.

The same thing happens at work. There are responsibilities I know how to handle well because I have done them hundreds of times. Handing one of those off means taking time to teach, accepting that someone may approach it differently, and knowing they might make a mistake along the way. When life is already busy, doing it yourself can feel like the easier option. The problem is that easier is not always better.

Every time I do something for my kids simply because I can do it faster, I may be taking away an opportunity for them to grow. And every time I hold onto something at work because I am worried someone will not do it exactly the way I would, I may be taking away an opportunity for someone on our team to learn and eventually become better at it than I am. None of us became proficient at anything without first being pretty bad at it. We learned by trying, making mistakes, correcting them, and trying again.

Letting go does not mean becoming hands-off. I still want to provide guidance, answer questions, and be there when I am genuinely needed. But I am learning there is a difference between being available to help and

immediately stepping in when things get difficult. Sometimes the better thing to do is let things get a little messy.

Watching my kids walk into third grade was a reminder of how quickly they are growing. They are capable of so much more today than they were in kindergarten. I do not want my own impatience to get in the way of what they are capable of becoming.

The same is true at work. If I want the people around me to grow, I must give them the opportunity to take ownership, make decisions, and learn from their mistakes.

So as another school year begins, I am working on something myself: a little more patience, a little less control, and getting better at knowing when to help and when to simply get out of the way.

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Most mistakes can be fixed.
Missed opportunities to grow
are harder to get back.

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SERVICE AREA: PERSONAL INJURY

When a Rideshare Driver Causes an Accident, Who Pays?

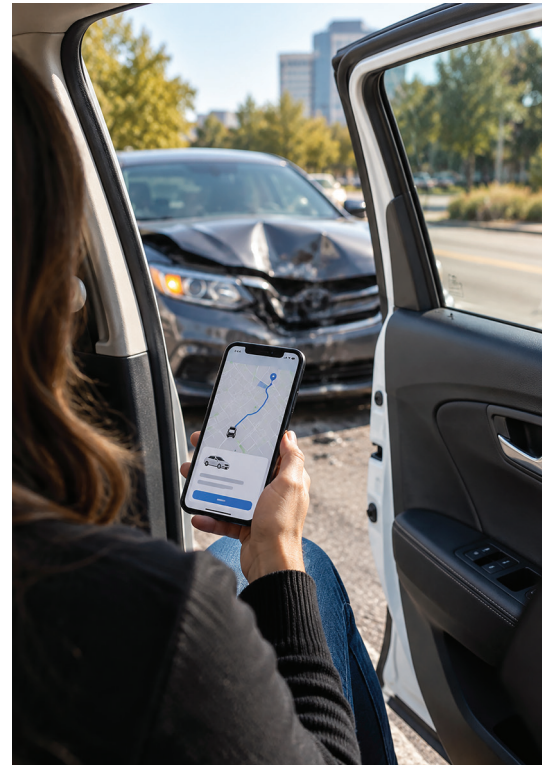
Rideshares are convenient until something goes wrong. If you are hurt in an Uber or Lyft accident in North Carolina, who pays can depend entirely on what the driver was doing in the app at the exact moment of the crash.

North Carolina Law creates three distinct coverage phases. If the driver was offline, only their personal auto insurance applies. If they were logged in but waiting for a ride request, Uber and Lyft provide contingent liability coverage of at least \$50,000 per person. Once a driver has accepted a trip or has a passenger in the vehicle, a \$1 million liability policy applies, covering passengers, other drivers, and pedestrians alike.

WHY THESE CASES GET COMPLICATED

Rideshare companies classify their drivers as independent contractors, not employees, which limits direct corporate liability. Personal insurers can also exclude coverage when the app is active, leaving victims caught between policies while bills pile up. North Carolina's strict contributory negligence rule applies here just as it does in any other accident, meaning even partial fault on your part can bar recovery entirely.

If you are involved in a rideshare accident, screenshot your app status if you were a passenger, call 911, document the scene, and speak with an attorney before giving a recorded statement to an insurance company.



SERVICE AREA: EMPLOYMENT LAW FOR EMPLOYERS

What Goes Into a Solid Employee Handbook

Most small businesses put together an employee handbook early on and never look at it again. The problem is that employment law changes, and a handbook that was compliant a few years ago may now contain gaps that create real exposure for the business and confusion for the people who work there.

A handbook is often the first formal communication a new employee receives. Beyond the legal requirements, it tells people what to expect, how decisions get made, and what the company stands for. North Carolina has specific requirements that many template handbooks miss, including wage deduction policies, final paycheck procedures, military leave, victim leave for domestic violence, school involvement leave, and E-Verify compliance for businesses with 25 or more employees. Federal requirements may also apply depending on headcount.

The most common trouble spots are anti-harassment policies with no clear reporting procedure, leave policies that have not kept up with federal law,

and at-will language accidentally watered down by other handbook provisions. These are some of the things employment attorneys look for when a former employee files a claim.

THE GOAL

A clear, current handbook gives employees a reliable reference for their rights, their benefits, and how to raise a concern. When people know what to expect, workplaces run better for everyone.





SERVICE AREA: PERSONAL INJURY

Keeping Your Family Safe on Halloween Night

Halloween is one of the most fun nights of the year, and it is also one of the most active for pedestrians. Across North Carolina, vehicles strike more than 3,000 pedestrians every year, and the combination of dark costumes, low lighting, and distracted drivers makes October 31st a night that deserves extra attention. Nationally, pedestrian fatalities on Halloween run about 43% higher than on a typical evening.

The risks are predictable and mostly preventable. Dark costumes make children hard to see, and many kids cross mid-block rather than at crosswalks. Adding reflective tape or glow sticks to costumes, carrying a flashlight, and sticking to sidewalks and designated crossings can significantly reduce the risk.

The most dangerous window is between 6 and 7 p.m., when foot traffic peaks and visibility drops.

Drivers carry just as much responsibility. Slowing down in residential neighborhoods, staying off phones, and giving extra time to react around parked cars and driveways can make a real difference. Alcohol is a factor in a significant portion of Halloween night crashes, so planning a safe ride home if you are celebrating is just as important as the costume.

If an accident does happen, North Carolina's contributory negligence rule applies just as it would on any other night. Documentation, witness accounts, and prompt medical attention all matter when it comes to protecting your rights.



ASK HARMAN LAW

Frequently Asked Questions



How do pre-existing conditions affect my personal injury claim?



A prior injury does not disqualify you from making a claim in NC. Under the eggshell plaintiff rule, the at-fault party is responsible for all harm they caused, even if a pre-existing condition made your injuries worse. Documentation of your health before and after the accident is essential.



What do I do if I witness discrimination against a coworker?



Document what you observed, including dates, what was said, and who was present. Report it through your employer's internal channels if you feel safe doing so. NC and federal law protect employees who report discrimination in good faith from retaliation.



What is the difference between an exempt and non-exempt employee?



Non-exempt employees must be paid overtime for hours worked over 40 in a week. Exempt employees generally are not entitled to overtime pay, but they must meet specific salary and duties tests to qualify for an exemption. A common misconception is that paying someone a salary automatically makes them exempt. It does not.



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SERVICE AREA: EMPLOYMENT LAW FOR EMPLOYEES

Why Your Job Title Does Not Determine Your Right to Overtime

One of the most common wage violations in North Carolina starts with a simple assumption: that certain job titles come with certain rules. A worker is called a manager or coordinator, given a salary, and told they are not eligible for overtime. In many cases, that is wrong.

Under the Fair Labor Standards Act, which governs overtime in North Carolina, your job title means nothing on its own. What matters is whether you meet three specific tests: you must be paid on a salary basis, you must earn at least \$684 per week, and your actual day-to-day duties must meet the federal definition for an executive, administrative, or professional exemption. All three conditions must be satisfied. If any one of them is not, you are non-exempt and entitled to overtime pay for every hour worked over 40 in a week, regardless of what your title says.



The NC Department of Labor is explicit on this point: being paid a salary does not exempt an employee from overtime requirements. Yet employers make this mistake frequently, sometimes intentionally and sometimes out of genuine confusion about the law. Either way, the result is the same. Workers are owed back pay, and employers can face double damages and attorney fees.

If you regularly work more than 40 hours a week and have never received overtime pay, it may be worth taking a closer look at how you have been classified.