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Suffered an industrial injury? Here's what to know

Many of the most severe workplace injuries are suffered in industrial settings like factories, refineries, power plants and construction sites.

For example, construction workers face risks such as collapsing scaffolds, crane accidents, getting tangled in machinery, and falling from high places.

In factories and manufacturing plants, workers can get injured by malfunctioning equipment, moving parts, forklift accidents, and exposure to dangerous chemicals, among other things.

Similarly, workers at oil refineries and chemical plants risk gas explosions, fires and toxic fumes, while power plant workers are vulnerable to hazards posed by high-voltage equipment.

In all these settings, improper safety training and noncompliance with safety standards can heighten the risk.

A lot of the time, recovery for injury will be limited to workers' compensation. But if a worker can establish that someone other than their direct employer, for example, a third-party contractor or an equipment manufacturer, is at fault, they may be able to pursue a lawsuit against the responsible party.

Take, for example, a recent case from Connecticut involving a factory worker who tried to clear a jam while operating a machine. He attempted to clear the jam manually, as he was trained to do, but his hand was pulled under the guarding and got crushed. Doctors ended up having to amputate several fingers. He also developed post-traumatic stress disorder.

As it turned out, a company that had rebuilt the machine before the accident failed to verify that the safety guarding met industry standards. As a result, a jury awarded the injured worker a substantial recovery reflecting how severe his injuries were and how they affected his life.

Meanwhile, in a Pennsylvania case, a 42-year-old construction worker was working in an excavated trench at a residential

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Why collectibles deserve special consideration in your estate plan

Art, antiques, classic cars, rare books, jewelry, watches, wine, coins, memorabilia.

Many families own collectibles without thinking of them as a formal part of their estate plan. Yet even a modest collection can raise unique legal, tax and practical issues if it's overlooked.

Because these assets often sit outside traditional financial statements, their impact is easy to underestimate until it's time to settle an estate.

Why collectibles deserve special attention

Collectibles are often personal, emotional and easy to miss in the broader planning process. Unlike brokerage accounts or real estate, they may not appear on a balance sheet or be reviewed regularly.

Common challenges include:

- *Unclear value.* Many collectibles haven't been appraised in years, or ever.
- *Incomplete records.* Provenance, purchase history and prior appraisals may be missing.
- *Assumptions about heirs.* Beneficiaries may not want the items, have space to store them, or know how to manage or sell them.
- *Surprise tax exposure.* Collectibles are subject to different tax rules than many other assets.

Left unaddressed, these issues can create confusion, family tension and delays during estate administration.

Special tax rules for collectibles

Collectibles are subject to a distinct set of tax rules that can affect both estate administration and long-term planning.

- *Disclosure and valuation requirements:* All property, including collectibles, must be disclosed for estate tax purposes and valued at fair market value, typically based on a qualified appraisal. Failure to disclose assets can be treated as tax fraud. The IRS has an Art Appraisal Services unit and employs specialists across a wide range of collectible categories. Informal estimates or outdated appraisals may invite scrutiny.
- *Capital gains:* The IRS classifies collectibles as alternative investments, and gains may be taxed at up to 28 percent compared to 20 percent for typical long-term capital gains. This distinction often surprises families who assume collectibles are treated like stocks or real estate.

Charitable planning with collectibles

Donating collectibles to charity can offer tax benefits, but the rules are specific. To receive a deduction for the full appreciated value, the donation must satisfy the "related-use" requirement, meaning the collectible must align with the charity's tax-exempt mission or purpose.

For example, donating artwork to an art museum would likely qualify, but donating the same piece to a homeless shelter might not. If the related-use requirement isn't met, your deduction may be limited to your cost basis rather than the current fair market value.

The IRS requires a qualified appraisal for claimed donations of $5,000 or more. For donations valued at $20,000 or more, additional reporting requirements apply.

Family dynamics

Estate planning isn't just about taxes; it's also about people. Heirs may have little interest in a collection, disagree about value or sentimental importance, or lack the space, resources, or expertise to manage or sell the items.

Addressing collectibles in advance allows you to clarify intentions, reduce potential conflict, and consider options such as lifetime gifts, charitable donations, or planned sales.

Steps to consider

If you own collectibles, it may be helpful to:

- Create or update an inventory of significant items
- Obtain periodic appraisals from qualified professionals
- Keep records of purchase history, provenance and insurance
- Revisit how these assets fit into your broader estate plan

Collectibles are part of your legacy, whether they were acquired intentionally or inherited along the way. Thoughtful planning can help ensure they're handled in a way that aligns with your wishes and avoids unnecessary complications for those you leave behind.

After decades, no-fault divorce now in question

For decades, no-fault divorce has been the legal standard across the United States.

Under this framework, a spouse can seek a divorce without proving misconduct such as adultery, abuse or abandonment. The goal has been to reduce conflict, simplify the process, and spare families from having to litigate painful personal details in court.

Recently, no-fault divorce has reentered the national conversation. In late 2025 and early 2026, some policy organizations and commentators began questioning whether existing laws should be changed. Proposals discussed publicly have included longer waiting periods, mandatory counseling, or additional procedural steps before a divorce can be finalized.

The debate has raised questions for people who may be considering separation or divorce.

Why it matters

Divorce laws affect how long the process takes, how much it costs, and how emotionally difficult it can be. No-fault divorce has allowed many families to resolve matters privately and focus on practical issues such as finances, parenting arrangements, and moving forward.

Any shift away from no-fault divorce could make the process more adversarial by requiring spouses to prove fault or navigate additional legal hurdles. Even more limited changes could impact timing, expense and access to relief in already difficult situations.

No immediate changes

For now, no-fault divorce remains the law in all 50 states.

Family law is governed primarily at the state level, and public debate does not automatically lead to new laws.

Still, debates like this are a reminder of the value of accurate information and early planning. If you are considering divorce, speaking with an attorney can help you understand your rights and options under current law, regardless of how future discussions unfold.

EEOC rescinds 2024 LGBTQ and anti-harassment guidance

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has voted 2-1 to rescind its 2024 enforcement guidance that had expanded interpretations of workplace protections for LGBTQ workers and individuals seeking reproductive care.

The revised policy was repealed on Jan. 22, 2026, following a change in the commission's membership that gave Republicans a 2-1 majority.

The 2024 guidance, which offered detailed examples of how anti-discrimination protections apply, had built on the U.S. Supreme Court's 2020 ruling in *Bostock v. Clayton County*, which found that Title VII's ban on sex discrimination covers sexual orientation and gender identity.

The guidance also addressed workplace harassment scenarios, including repeated refusal to use an employee's preferred pronouns and other conduct tied to gender identity or sexual orientation.

In rescinding the guidance, the EEOC's majority said the 2024 document exceeded the agency's authority by offering interpretations that went beyond existing statutory language.

The repeal does not change the underlying protections in Title VII, which prohibits discrimination based on sex, including sexual orientation and gender identity. However, employers will no longer have the 2024 guidance as a roadmap for how the agency might apply those protections in harassment cases.

Critics warn that without the detailed examples and explanations in the prior guidance, employers

may face uncertainty in interpreting how anti-discrimination law applies in specific situations, and employees may have fewer clarity points when asserting claims.

Supporters argued that the guidance had overreached and was not subject to appropriate notice-and-comment rulemaking.

For employers, the decision highlights the importance of evaluating anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies based on Title VII's statutory protections.

Employers should ensure that training and internal practices remain consistent with current law and be prepared for potential challenges in interpreting protections tied to sexual orientation and gender identity.

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construction site when an eight-foot, three-ton wall of dirt collapsed and crushed him against the concrete foundation being built. The worker didn't survive the accident.

His family sought to hold responsible the company that dug the trench. The company apparently failed to slope or "bench" the walls of the ditch to prevent cave-ins.

In their lawsuit, the family obtained evidence that the company had received three citations for violating Occupational Safety and Health Administration standards. Rather than risk going before a jury, the company agreed to settle the case out of court, paying a significant sum to the worker's survivors.

Along similar lines, an Oregon man who worked in a shipyard during the 1970s and 1980s recently recovered a seven-figure verdict after being diagnosed with mesothelioma, a serious and often fatal form of cancer that affects the mesothelium, a thin layer of tissue that covers internal organs.

During his years repairing ships, the worker was exposed to products containing asbestos, which causes mesothelioma. With the help of medical experts, a jury found the manufacturer of the asbestos products to blame for the worker's harm and compensated him accordingly.

The outcome of any case will depend on its unique facts, and industrial accident cases can be very complicated given the potential number of parties involved and intensive investigation required. However, working with an experienced attorney can put you at an advantage.

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Rental fees and lease terms: Avoiding problems before they start

Most landlord-tenant disputes don't begin with major issues such as eviction or nonpayment. They start with smaller disagreements, often about fees, lease language, or expectations that weren't clearly spelled out at the beginning of a tenancy.

For many landlords, especially those who own one or two rental properties, these issues aren't intentional. They come from using older lease templates, relying on informal explanations, or assuming that long-standing practices are understood by everyone involved.

In recent years, disputes over rental fees have become more common. Such disputes typically involve charges outside of base rent, such as application fees, administrative fees, required services, or other add-ons.

When a tenant challenges a fee, the focus is usually on whether the fee was clearly disclosed and properly documented.

Why disclosure matters

Across the country, courts and regulators are looking closely at what a tenant was told before signing a lease and what the lease actually says.

If a fee appears late in the process, is described vaguely, or is applied inconsistently, it can become a point of conflict, even if the amount itself is modest.

The issue is especially relevant for smaller landlords, who may manage properties themselves rather than through professional management companies. Informal arrangements can work well for years, but they leave little room for error if a disagreement arises.

Common issues that lead to disputes

Some of the most frequent problems arise when:

- Fees are mentioned verbally but not clearly written into the lease
- Lease language hasn't been updated to reflect current practices
- Third-party screening or payment services add charges tenants weren't expecting
- A fee is described as optional but functions as mandatory

None of these situations necessarily means a landlord has done something wrong. But they can complicate matters if a tenant raises concerns or seeks legal guidance.

A practical takeaway

Clear, plain-language leases and consistent fee disclosures help prevent misunderstandings.

Reviewing lease terms periodically, confirming that all fees are explained upfront, and making sure written documents match actual practices can reduce the risk of disputes and protect both landlords and tenants.