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SCOTT BARON & ASSOCIATES PC: Back, and better than before



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BY MAGGIE HAYES
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Scott Baron refused to let two decades of hard work and service to the community be washed away by Sandy, and now, once more, Scott Baron & Associates PC is fully restored and open for business — better than before.

The first floor of Baron's Howard Beach office was completely destroyed by Sandy.

"We lost the entire floor," Baron said. "After being here almost 20 years and not even closing for half an hour, we were down. That's why I pushed into survival mode."

While rebuilding the first floor completely, Baron moved operations to the office's second floor and also to his second office in Yonkers. Though it was a little cramped, he said, his office remained fully functional for all clients.

He said that prior to the storm he never foresaw any serious Sandy damage to his office and was caught by surprise when the storm proved him wrong.

However, the company has been busier than ever and able to accommodate its clients.

"I stress team effort," Baron said, "and I put a team on every case to get the best results possible."

Baron said the first floor was entirely redone with new furniture, rugs, walls, phones and more. Baron said the space is now more functional, complete with state-of-the-art technology.

And to celebrate, Baron and his staff hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Monday, June 24 with special guest State Senator Joseph Addabbo.

Baron's office, a personal injury firm, has handled thousands of cases in the city, county, state, appellate and federal courts on behalf of the severely injured and people charged with criminal matters. The new, fully operational office will continue to serve those clients and the community.

He was appointed to the New York State Judicial Screening Committee Second Department, where his role is to screen prospective judicial applicants and/or judges up for possible reelection.

To give back, Baron does pro bono and related work with the Ozone Howard Little League, Byram Hills Educational Foundation and others. He is also a part of organizations including the Kings County and the Second Judicial District, Toys for Hospitalized Children, the Queens County Bar Association and, most recently, the Houston Food Bank as part of the NBA Cares program.

Baron looks forward to continuing his work with and for the people.

"To another 20 years," he said.

The law firm of Scott Baron & Associates, P.C., founded in 1994, is located at 159-49 Cross Bay Boulevard, Howard Beach, New York 11414. To learn more, call 1-866-WAS-HURT or visit www.scottbaronassociates.com.



THE COURIER/Photos by Mike DiBartolomeo

1. State Senator Joseph Addabbo presents Scott Baron, Esq. with a proclamation.

2. Stephanie Ruocco, management; Alex Pangilinan, office manager; Andrea R. Palmer, Esq. managing attorney, and Scott Baron, Esq.

3. Stephanie Ruocco, management; Scott Baron, Esq.; Alex Pangilinan, office manager; and Andrea R. Palmer, Esq. managing attorney.



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- Ladder & scaffolds
- Construction accidents
- Slip & fall
- Dog bites
- Job related injuries
- Lead poisoning
- Wrongful death

Mandatory Arbitration is a bad deal for consumers

If you have signed a contract for a cell phone, credit card, nursing home care, or even an employment contract, you have likely signed away your rights to a trial by jury through the mandatory arbitration clause.

The mandatory arbitration clause has become a favorite item for corporations to slip into the fine print of their contracts. By signing it, you agree to settle any future disputes through arbitration and not through the courts. This is a bad deal for several reasons. You may not be able to obtain necessary evidence. You will be forced to pay filing fees (generally more than \$750) as well as the arbiter's hourly fee (routinely \$400 or more per hour). All that money doesn't buy you much either. A September 2007 Public Citizen report found that in the more than 19,000 credit card arbitration cases in California, arbiters ruled in favor of the corporation almost 95% of the time.

In November of 2006, Erika Ricer thought she had purchased a safe car that would last her family for a number of years. The night Erika drove the car home, the trouble started. The wind shield wipers quit working

while she was driving her six-year old daughter in a rain storm that night and the next morning on her way back to the dealership, the "Check Engine" light went on. Despite being assured by the dealer that the car had undergone quality assurance inspections and had never been in an accident, Erika was actually sold a rebuilt wreck that had been in a crash where the car was seriously damaged and the air bags deployed.

Erika's contract with the dealership contained a mandatory arbitration clause. Despite never checking the box in the agreement that acknowledged this clause, Erika is being forced into arbitration by the dealership's lawyers, a costly process she cannot afford.

Explaining her situation, Erika said, "I can't even afford the cost of going through with the arbitration process the dealer is demanding. In order to just start the process of arbitration, I would have to pay half or more of all the costs of arbitration. I have learned that arbitrators' fees usually



range from at least \$700 - \$1800 per day, with an average of \$1300. In addition to the arbitration fees, I would also have to pay half of the administrative fees. I know that the cards are totally stacked against me in the arbitration process that the dealers want me to go through."*

If you have been forced into the arbitration process, call our office for an evaluation of your case.

**Erika's story reprinted courtesy of the American Association for Justice.*

Distracted driving increases accident risk

Talking on a cell phone while driving has been found to quadruple the risk of being in an accident. That's about the same as driving drunk! Texting is even worse, elevating the risk of being in an accident to eight times normal.



Distracted driving has become a serious problem on our roads. It's not just cell phones either; eating, drinking, grooming, changing the music, reading, programming the GPS, and watching a video are among the many other distractions that increase the chance of having an accident.

According to traffic safety experts, there are three main types of distractions - manual, visual, and cognitive. That means taking your hands off the wheel, eyes off the road, and mind off the task of driving. Texting is so bad because it involves all three types.

If a driver spends just five seconds sending or receiving a text message, at highway

speed, it means the car will travel about the length of a football field without that driver paying attention. A lot can happen on that amount of road.

While many states and localities have passed laws regarding distracted driving (with more on the way), it is ultimately up to each of us to make sure we are paying attention when behind the wheel.

The group End Distracted Driving is trying to raise awareness of this growing safety problem. To find out what they are doing and what you can do to help, visit them on the Web at www.EndDD.org.

FACT
OR

False claims about

FICTION

There are more false claims made about the civil justice system than we can count. That's why we'd like to take this opportunity to clear up a few of the more prominent falsehoods.

+ *Personal injury lawsuits are clogging up the courts.* You hear this one a lot but that doesn't make it true. The fact is that personal injury (or tort) cases make up only about 5% of all civil cases in the country. Tort cases declined between 1999 and 2008 by 25%, continuing a decades-long trend.

+ *Doctors are under attack by more and more malpractice lawsuits every year.* It sure sounds that way when you listen to people talk about "tort reform", but between 2001 and 2010 the number of medical malpractice payments has actually dropped by 35%.

+ *Winning a lawsuit is like winning the lottery.* While the cases that make headlines may bring to mind "jackpot justice", the median award in a tort case is only \$31,000. Additionally, this amount has been decreasing over the years.

Answering your questions about asbestos



Q: What is asbestos?

A: Asbestos is one of six types of naturally-occurring minerals. Its fibers have been used in insulation and flame-retardants, as well as other building materials, automotive parts, gaskets, and more.

Q: What are the health risks of asbestos exposure?

A: When asbestos fibers are inhaled, they lodge themselves deep inside the lungs, in the bronchia. When these fibers accumulate, they cause inflammation and scarring which causes chronic coughing and chest pain. Eventually, this can lead to mesothelioma, or cancer of

the pleural lining (inside the lungs). It can also lead to lung cancer or asbestosis, a serious, progressive, long-term, non-cancer disease of the lungs.

Q: How can I tell if I have asbestos in my home?

A: There is no easy way to tell. It is best to contact a trained and accredited asbestos professional.

Q: What should I do if I have asbestos in my home?

A: Don't panic. If the material is not damaged or disturbed, it is not likely to pose a health risk. If the material is damaged or you are planning on remodeling, you will probably need to have it removed or repaired by a professional.



Magnets pose serious health risk to children

Small magnets in toys, jewelry, clothing, and other household items can cause severe injury and even death if swallowed by a child.

If a child swallows more than one small magnet, or a magnet and a piece of metal, they can attract each other inside the intestines. This can twist the intestines and tear holes in the intestinal walls. It can also lead to infection, blood poisoning (sepsis), and death. Surgery may be the only option.

Most reported cases involve children under 3 years old, but children of all ages have been involved in incidents. Even older children have been known to accidentally swallow magnets while pretending they are tongue or cheek piercings.

If you think your child may have ingested a magnet, please seek medical attention immediately.



When dogs bite

Every year in the United States, approximately 800,000 people seek medical attention for a dog bite.

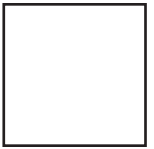
If you are bitten by a dog or other animal, the first thing you need to do is seek medical attention. If left untreated, a bite can cause severe injury, infection, and even death if the animal is diseased. The next step is to contact an attorney.

Depending on the circumstances, you may be entitled to recover damages for medical expenses, lost wages, pain and suffering, and property damages. We can

help to determine what compensation is appropriate to seek in your particular case. During your consultation with us, we will ask you for information like the name and phone number of the animal's owner and any witnesses. It is also helpful to know if the animal has a history of aggressive behavior.



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Thanks to all of you who have recommended our firm to your relatives, friends, and neighbors. We appreciate your vote of confidence and pledge to care for these "VIPs" as well as we care for you.

Juicy, delicious, and safe



When preparing meat, poultry, eggs, and seafood it is important to make sure the finished product is both tasty and safe. Using a simple kitchen thermometer and the chart below, you can be sure the food reaches an internal temperature high enough to eliminate any harmful bacteria.

When probing, place the thermometer into the thickest part of the food, being sure not to touch any bone. It is a good idea to probe it in a few spots, to make sure the food is evenly heated. The following recommendations are from The Food and Drug Administration.

Food Item	Ground beef, pork, veal, & lamb	Ground turkey & chicken	Fresh beef, pork, veal, & lamb	Fresh poultry	Ham (raw)	Ham (pre-cooked)	Eggs	Egg dishes	Fin fish	Shrimp, lobster, & crab	Clams, oysters, & mussels	Scallops	Leftovers & casseroles
Cook to	160°F	165°F	145°F	165°F	160°F	140°F	yolk and white are firm	160°F	145°F	flesh pearly and opaque	shells open during cooking	milky white or opaque and firm	165°F

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