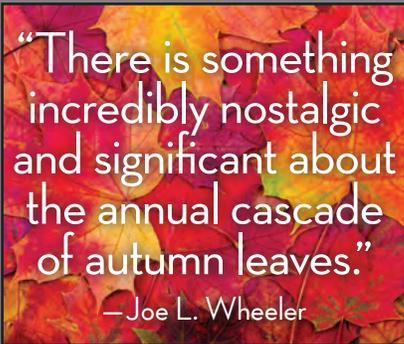


# COPLAN+CRANE CHRONICLES



With the new school year underway, we remind drivers to stay alert, especially when driving in school zones. Cell phone use—even hands-free—is prohibited in school speed zones. Always remember to obey the signals of crossing guards, and never attempt to pass a stopped school bus with lights flashing. Halloween is right around the corner. Keep your children safe by making sure they trick-or-treat in familiar neighborhoods with well-lit homes, and do not accept anything that isn't commercially wrapped. Reflective tape on treat bags or costumes will make your child more visible in the dark.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

\$1,410,000 Verdict For Man Injured At Home Depot	p1
Large Settlement For Victims Of Motorcycle Accidentt	p2
Injured Construction Worker Receives Large Settlement	p3
Dangerous Drugs and Defective Products	p3
Attorney Spotlight Stephen Blecha: Putting Words Into Action	p4

## \$1,410,000 VERDICT FOR MAN INJURED AT HOME DEPOT

A man whose ability to earn a living was affected after an accident at a Home Depot is now in a better position to support his family after a jury included damages totaling \$1,410,000 in their verdict. The case highlights the failure by “Big Box” warehouse stores to provide a safe environment for customers buying large, heavy items, says Ben Crane, who represented the victim with Blake Vance.

Our client, Monty, went to a Home Depot store in Schaumburg with a friend, who was buying a wardrobe cabinet. They requested help from a store employee to load the boxed cabinet—which weighed 200 pounds—onto a cart. While the employee was helping them, the box fell onto Monty’s foot. An ambulance was called and he was taken to the hospital.

Tests revealed permanent damage to the peroneal nerve, resulting in significant, constant pain across the top of his foot, and causing a permanent limp. Monty underwent months of physical therapy and medications. He had more than 60 doctor visits to try to find relief, and underwent seven MRIs and four electromyography/nerve conduction studies, trying to find a cure.

His medical expenses were more than a \$100,000.00, and were expected to rise significantly. Doctors determined he will likely need more surgeries on his foot to reduce pain and improve mobility. These include an arthroscopic procedure to remove damaged tissue and possibly, surgery to permanently fuse the bones in Monty’s ankle.

We proved to the jury that Home Depot failed to take the steps needed to protect customers from harm, and that the store

employee was negligent for improperly loading the cabinet onto the cart. While the employee shared some of the responsibility for what happened, Ben notes it was Home Depot’s lack of safety practices that made this type of accident inevitable. “Home Depot put the worker in a position to fail, and he did,” Ben says.

Even though he was still in pain, Monty returned to work after three weeks because he has a wife and two children to support. Fortunately, his employer was very accommodating, allowing him to work reduced hours. While Monty was eventually able to return to work full-time, his job requires him to stand all day, and his injuries have made that difficult. At trial, we presented evidence showing his problems were going to progress, and that these ongoing problems would result in a loss of earning capacity.

Big Box stores can be dangerous places, and the risk of falling merchandise is always present. The marketing decision by stores like Home Depot to appeal to do-it-yourselfers does not absolve them of the responsibility to protect their customers. “This should never have happened,” Ben says. “Home Depot could have prevented it by having the proper checks and balances and safeguards in place.”

The jury agreed. After deliberating for about three hours, they found in Monty’s favor. While he faces further problems with his foot, this verdict gives him the resources to pay for future medical expenses. And if he reaches a point where he’s unable to work, the compensation in the jury’s verdict can help him support his family. We are pleased to have been able to help Monty get these positive results.

# LARGE SETTLEMENT FOR VICTIMS OF MOTORCYCLE ACCIDENT

There's a bumper sticker that encourages drivers to "Start Seeing Motorcycles." One case serves as a reminder of the serious consequences when they don't.

Michael T. was driving his motorcycle west on Route 72 in Ogle County on a warm, sunny afternoon. Rebecca E. was his passenger. Further down the road, a car was slowly driving east. The driver's attention was focused on looking for a specific address, but he had passed it. He decided to turn around and made a left turn into a driveway—directly into the path of Mike's motorcycle.

The motorcycle hit the right rear door of the car. Mike and Rebecca were thrown off the bike and onto the pavement. Other drivers on the road had to brake and swerve to avoid hitting them. Mike's right ankle and right arm were broken, and Rebecca broke her right leg. Both required several surgeries.

The injuries prevented Mike, a bricklayer, and Rebecca, a home health aide, from working for nearly a year. Greg Coplan and Ben Crane took the case and filed suit against the driver, who denied responsibility.



The section of the road where the accident happened is straight, but on a gentle hill. The driver of the car claimed he could not see the motorcycle coming, and tried to blame Mike for the wreck. "What he was trying to suggest was that Mike was on the other side of the hill, and was going so fast that the driver couldn't have seen him," Greg says.

But we were able to prove the driver wrong. Witness statements and expert analysis agreed that the motorcycle was traveling at a speed of roughly 55 m.p.h., the posted speed limit. We also proved the driver of the car had a clear line of sight of oncoming traffic, and plenty of time to see the motorcycle. Because of the strong case we put together, the defense agreed to a \$1.4 million settlement on the first day of trial.

This accident could have been prevented if the driver had simply been paying attention. "As defensive drivers, and we all should be, we have to be looking for motorcycles," Greg says. We are pleased that Mike and Rebecca were able to recover from their injuries, and that we could help them reach a positive outcome in their case. We hope it draws attention to the role all drivers play in preventing motorcycle accidents.

## FORMER CLIENTS SPEAK OUT ABOUT COPLAN+CRANE

In Oak Park and throughout Illinois, we have helped hundreds of people injured in accidents obtain the compensation and benefits they deserve. But personal injury law is about much more than money. We're committed to providing our clients with the support they need to rebuild their lives. But don't just take our word for it. Read what our former clients have to say about Coplan+Crane.

Thank you and your entire staff for your work on my case. I'm sure you all worked hard. I believe we were successful because of all your efforts and I am most pleased with the results. Best wishes to all.

- Charlotte B.

I just want you to know that now that we are getting close to the end, when I look back, I very much appreciate you and the extra mile you went to care about Jacob and I. I appreciate the relationship that we have had during this time of my life...Thank you for pressing through to try to achieve the things that you know I wanted to accomplish through this case.

- Bridget H.

I'm calling because I forgot to say "thank you" last time I talked to you guys...Advice is much better than money and you guys helped me. The last time we talked about the case, you guys really helped me.

- Pamela

# INJURED CONSTRUCTION WORKER RECEIVES LARGE SETTLEMENT

## USE FALL PROTECTION!

FALLS FROM HEIGHTS ARE THE LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY.



When safety standards on construction sites aren't met, people get hurt. At Coplan+Crane, we are proud to be able to help workers get back on their feet when they've been injured on the job due to negligence.

Our client, Anthony R., was a member of a crew assembled by a subcontractor hired to build a scaffold in the gymnasium of

Marshall High School in Chicago. F.H. Paschen was the general contractor in charge of the project.

The Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) has rules in place for fall protection on construction sites. These rules require that a tie-off system be used when workers are exposed to falls of more than six feet. In these systems, workers wear safety harnesses tied off to nearby anchorage points. This prevents them from falling to the ground if the scaffold collapses.

As the scaffold was being set up, Ryan P., the carpenter foreman at the site, told a superintendent for the general contractor that there was no tie-off system in place for the safety harnesses. "Everybody agreed they needed to wear harnesses," Ben Crane says. But no action was taken, and work continued on the project without those safety measures.

One morning, Anthony and Ryan were on top of the scaffold, about 21 feet in the air. The scaffold collapsed, and both men fell to the ground. Anthony suffered injuries to his left wrist, requiring two surgeries. Ryan seriously hurt his right elbow, and needed several surgeries and procedures.

Together with Ryan's attorneys, Sean Murray and Marc Taxman, Coplan+Crane filed suit, noting there was clear negligence. "The allegation against the general contractor was they didn't have a plan in place for fall protection," Ben says. The superintendent was responsible for making sure a tie-off system was set up before work started. It was later discovered the superintendent had been hired only days before the accident, and had no experience overseeing fall protection measures. We were able to negotiate a settlement for \$1.3 million for the two workers.

Lack of fall protection was the top safety standard violation in fiscal year 2015, according to OSHA. Fortunately, Anthony was able to return to work after eight months. But like so many other construction accident injuries, this could have easily been prevented.

## DANGEROUS DRUGS & DEFECTIVE PRODUCTS

### POPULAR MEDICATION CAN HAVE A DANGEROUS SIDE EFFECT

Coplan+Crane is now taking cases involving the use of Xarelto. This is an extremely popular blood-thinning medication manufactured by Bayer and marketed in the United States by Janssen Pharmaceuticals, a subsidiary of Johnson & Johnson.

Millions of people have been prescribed Xarelto to prevent blood clots. But use of the drug can cause uncontrolled internal bleeding – and because, unlike other blood thinning medications, Xarelto currently has no antidote to reverse this side effect, that bleeding can be fatal.

Thousands of lawsuits have already been filed, with the first trials scheduled to begin early next year.

WE ALSO CURRENTLY REPRESENT VICTIMS HARMED BY THESE MEDICAL DEVICES AND DRUGS:

- **Transvaginal Mesh**  
*Mesh fails in woman treated for urinary incontinence and organ prolapse*
- **Zimmer knee replacements**  
*Device may fail or loosen*
- **Invokana**  
*Diabetes medication—causes ketoacidosis*
- **Actos**  
*Diabetes medication—causes bladder cancer*
- **Zofran**  
*Anti-morning sickness and nausea drug—causes birth defects*
- **Stryker Rejuvenate and ABG hip implants**  
*Causes hip pain and swelling, and toxic levels of metals in patients' blood*



# STEPHEN BLECHA: PUTTING WORDS INTO ACTION

After graduating from the University of Iowa, Stephen Blecha considered a career in the publishing industry, because he loves to write. But

he decided to become a lawyer when he realized how much writing was a part of the job.

While still attending the University of Illinois College of Law, Stephen joined Coplan+Crane as a clerk, drafting and editing motions, appellate briefs and other documents. When he graduated magna cum laude a year later, he had other options. But he chose to stay on as an associate attorney, and not just because he enjoyed the writing.

“What drew me here, and what’s kept me at this firm are the people,” Stephen says. “They’re passionate, and we get excited about what we do.”

As an associate, Stephen has worked on cases involving the Federal Employers Liability Act (FELA), car accidents, truck accidents, whistleblower complaints, wrongful death claims, medical malpractice, premises liability, insurance, and bad faith litigation. He enjoys

helping clients resolve their cases successfully, especially those involving complex legal issues that allow him the opportunity to learn new things.

A mission trip to Haiti after graduating college helped him realize the satisfaction in helping others. He accompanied his father, an oral surgeon, on a dental mission to the tiny mountain village of Duchity. In an impoverished area with no running water, Stephen assisted with extractions in people who had tooth infections.

“People would walk for hours to get there to be able to have a tooth pulled, because they were in pain every day,” he says. “Having a chance to help in this way was a very rewarding experience for me.”

Stephen often has moments that highlight the fact he’s chosen the right profession. Early in his career, he spent an exhausting two hours arguing motions on a case in front of a judge. He didn’t win them all. But the ones he did win were instrumental in convincing the defendant to later agree to a \$1 million settlement for the client. “I enjoyed preparing for it, I enjoyed arguing,” Stephen says. “And knowing my work paid off for our client... that’s one of those moments.”

## OFFICE INFORMATION

1111 Westgate Street | Oak Park, IL 60301

**Call us at (708) 358-8080  
or toll-free at (800) 394-6002**

**[www.coplancrane.com](http://www.coplancrane.com)**

## EDITORIAL NOTES

Susan M. Gerovasil, CLM

Executive Director

708.358.8080 Voice

708.358.8181 Fax



**COPLAN+CRANE**

1111 WESTGATE STREET  
OAK PARK, ILLINOIS 60301

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