

JURY INSTRUCTION NO. ____

Members of the Jury:

In any jury trial there are in effect, two judges. I am one of the judges; the other is the jury. It is my duty to preside over the trial and to decide what evidence is proper for your consideration. It is also my duty at the end of the trial to explain to you the rules of law that you must follow and apply in arriving at your verdict.

First, I will give you some general instructions which apply in every case; for example, instructions about burden of proof and how to judge the believability of witnesses. Then I will give you some specific rules of law about this particular case, and finally I will explain to you the procedures you should follow in your deliberations.

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You, as jurors, are the judges of the facts. But in determining what actually happened in this case -- that is, in reaching your decision as to the facts -- it is your sworn duty to follow the law I am now in the process of defining for you.

You must follow all of my instructions as a whole. You have no right to disregard or give special attention to any one instruction, or to question the wisdom or correctness of any rule I may state to you. You must not substitute or follow your own notion or opinion as to what the law is or ought to be. It is your duty to apply the law as I explain it to you, regardless of the consequences.

It is also your duty to base your verdict solely upon the evidence, without prejudice or sympathy. That was the promise you made and the oath you took before being accepted by the parties as jurors, and they have the right to expect nothing less.

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This case should be considered and decided by you as an action between persons of equal standing in the community, of equal worth, and holding the same or similar stations in life. All persons stand equal before the law and are to be dealt with as equals in a court of justice.

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It is a general rule in civil cases that a party seeking recovery or a party relying upon a defense has the burden of proving every essential element of its claim or defense by the greater weight of the evidence.

To prove by the greater weight of the evidence means to establish that something is more likely true than not true. When I say in these instructions that a party has the burden of proof, I mean that you must be persuaded that what is sought to be proved is more probably true than not true. Evenly balanced evidence is not sufficient.

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Although there is more than one plaintiff in this action, it does not follow from that fact alone that if one is entitled to recover, another is entitled to recover. The rights of the various plaintiffs in this lawsuit are separate and distinct, and you should decide the issues as if each plaintiff had brought a separate lawsuit.

In this connection, you will note that some of the instructions apply to one plaintiff, while other instructions apply to all plaintiffs.

Although there is more than one defendant in this action, it does not follow from that fact alone that if one is liable another is liable. Each defendant is entitled to a fair consideration of his own defense. You will decide each defendant's case separately, as if each were a separate lawsuit.

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One of the parties in this case is a corporation. A corporation is entitled to the same fair and unprejudiced treatment as an individual, and you should decide the case with the same impartiality as you would use in deciding a case between individuals.

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A corporation can act only through its officers and employees. Any act or omission of an officer or an employee of a corporation, within the scope or course of his or her employment, is the act or omission of the corporation.

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As stated earlier, it is your duty to determine the facts and in so doing you must consider only the evidence I have admitted in the case. The term “evidence” includes the sworn testimony of the witnesses and the exhibits admitted in the record.

Remember that any statements, objections, or arguments made by the lawyers are not evidence in the case. The function of the lawyers is to point out those things that are most significant or most helpful to their side of the case and, in so doing, to call your attention to certain facts or inferences that might otherwise escape your notice. In the final analysis, however, it is your own recollection and interpretation of the evidence that controls in the case. What the lawyers say is not binding upon you.

Also, do not assume from anything that I may have done or said during the trial that I have any opinion concerning any of the issues in the case. Except for the instructions to you on the law, you should disregard anything that I may have said during the trial in arriving at your own findings as to the facts.

So, while you should consider only the evidence in the case, you are permitted to draw such reasonable inferences from the testimony and exhibits as you feel are justified in the light of common experience. In other words, you may make deductions and reach conclusions which reason and common sense lead you to draw from the facts which have been established by the testimony and evidence in the case.

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You may consider either direct or circumstantial evidence. "Direct evidence" is the testimony of one who asserts actual knowledge of a fact, such as an eye witness. "Circumstantial evidence" consists of proof of facts or circumstances which give rise to a reasonable inference of the truth of the fact sought to be proved. The law makes no distinction between the weight to be given to either direct or circumstantial evidence.

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Now, I have said that you must consider all of the evidence. This does not mean, however, that you must accept all of the evidence as true or accurate.

You are the sole judges of the credibility or “believability” of each witness and the weight to be given to the witness’ testimony. In weighing the testimony of a witness you should consider the witness’ relationship to the plaintiff or to the defendant; the witness’ interest, if any, in the outcome of the case; the manner of testifying; the opportunity to observe or acquire knowledge concerning the facts about which the witness testified; candor, fairness, and intelligence; and the extent to which the witness has been supported or contradicted by other credible evidence or previous statements inconsistent with the witness’ present testimony. You may, in short, accept or reject the testimony of any witness in whole or in part.

Also, the weight of the evidence is not necessarily determined by the number of witnesses testifying as to the existence or non-existence of any fact. You may find that the testimony of a smaller number of witnesses as to any fact is more credible than the testimony of a larger number of witnesses to the contrary.

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A witness may be discredited or impeached by contradictory evidence or inconsistent conduct, or by evidence that at other times the witness has made material statements, under oath or otherwise, which are inconsistent with the present testimony of the witness, or by evidence that the general reputation of the witness for truth, honesty, or integrity is bad.

[or by evidence that the witness has been convicted of a crime]

[or by specific acts of wrongdoing of the witness]

If you believe that any witness has been impeached or discredited, it is your exclusive province to give the testimony of that witness only such credit as you may think it deserves.

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The rules of evidence provide that if scientific, technical, or other specialized knowledge might assist you in understanding the evidence or in determining a fact in issue, a witness qualified as an expert by knowledge, skill, experience, training, or education may testify and state an expert opinion concerning such matters.

You should consider each expert opinion received in evidence in this case and give it such weight as you may think it deserves. If you should decide that the opinion of an expert witness is not based on sufficient education and experience, or if you should conclude that the reasons given in support of the opinion are not sound, or that the opinion is outweighed by other evidence, then you may disregard the opinion entirely.

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An expert witness is permitted to state an opinion based upon a question which, for the purposes of trial, assumes as true certain facts which may or may not be true.

It will be for you in your deliberations, however, to determine from all of the evidence whether or not the facts assumed have been proved to be true.

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Certain charts and summaries have been shown to you in order to help explain the facts disclosed by the books, records, and other documents that are in evidence in this case. Such charts or summaries are used for convenience. They are not themselves evidence or proof of any facts. If they do not correctly reflect the facts or figures shown by the evidence in the case, you should disregard these charts and summaries and determine the facts from the underlying evidence.

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Some evidence is admitted for a limited purpose only. When I instruct you that an item of evidence has been admitted for a limited purpose, you must consider it only for that limited purpose and for no other.

JURY INSTRUCTION NO. _____

Deposition testimony is testimony that was taken under oath before trial and has been preserved in writing. This testimony is entitled to the same consideration that you give any other testimony at this trial.

JURY INSTRUCTION NO. ____

Interrogatories are written questions asked by one party to another before trial and answered under oath. The questions and answers may be read at trial as evidence. The answers read to you are testimony under oath and are entitled to the same consideration that you give any other testimony.

JURY INSTRUCTION NO. _____

An attorney has the right to interview a witness for the purpose of learning what testimony the witness will give. The fact that the witness has talked to an attorney does not reflect adversely on the truth of such testimony.

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A proximate cause of an injury is that which in a natural and continuous sequence, produces the injury and without which the damages would not have occurred. It need not be the only cause, nor the last nor nearest cause. It is sufficient if it occurs with some other cause acting at the same time, which in combination with it causes the injury.

JURY INSTRUCTION NO. _____

The proximate cause of an injury is that which, in a natural and continuous sequence unbroken by any independent intervening cause, produces the injury and without which the injury would not have occurred. It need not be the only cause, nor the last nor nearest cause. It is sufficient if it occurs with some other cause acting at the same time which, in combination with it, causes the injury.

“Independent intervening cause” is that which interrupts the natural sequence of events that could reasonably be expected to result from the condition in which a product was sold or from a foreseeable manner of use. An independent intervening cause unforeseeably turns aside the course of events and produces a result which could not reasonably have been expected.

JURY INSTRUCTION NO. _____

You are not to engage in any discussion of damages unless you have first determined that there is liability, as elsewhere covered in these instructions.

The fact that you are given instructions on damages is not to be taken as an indication as to whether the court thinks damages should or should not be awarded.

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Damages must be reasonable. If you should find that the plaintiff is entitled to a verdict, you may only award such damages as will reasonably compensate the plaintiff for such injury and damage as you find, from a preponderance of the evidence in the case, that the plaintiff has sustained as a proximate result of the accident.

You are not permitted to award speculative damages. So, you are not to include in any verdict compensation for any prospective loss which, although possible, is not reasonably certain to occur in the future.

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You must not award compensatory damages more than once for the same injury. For example, if the plaintiff prevails on both [his/her/its] claims and establishes a dollar amount for [his/her/its] injuries, you must not award the plaintiff any additional compensatory damages on each claim. The plaintiff is only entitled to be made whole once and may not recover more than [he/she/it] has lost. Of course, if different injuries are attributed to the separate claims, then you must compensate the plaintiff fully for all injuries.

JURY INSTRUCTION NO. _____

If you have found that plaintiff is entitled to damages arising in the future, you must determine the amount of such damages.

If these damages are of a continuing nature, you may consider how long they will continue.

As to loss of future earning ability, you may consider that some individuals work all of their lives and others do not; an individual's earnings may remain the same or may increase or decrease in the future.

JURY INSTRUCTIONS NO. _____

In fixing the amount you may award for damages arising in the future, you must reduce the total of such damages by making allowance for the fact that any award you might make would, if properly invested, earn interest. You should, therefore, allow a reasonable discount for the earning power of such money and arrive at the present cash value of the total future damages, if any.

Damages for any future pain and suffering are not to be so reduced.

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In fixing the amount of money which will reasonably and fairly compensate the plaintiff, you are to consider that one who is damaged must exercise ordinary care to minimize existing damages and to prevent further damages. A plaintiff may not recover for losses which could have been prevented by reasonable efforts on **his/her** part.

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According to a table of mortality, the life expectancy of [NAME] is [NUMBER] additional years. This figure is not conclusive. It is the average life expectancy of persons who have reached that age. This figure may be considered by you in connection with other evidence relating to the probable life expectancy of [NAME], including evidence of HIS/HER occupation, health, habits, and other activities. Bear in mind that some individuals live longer or shorter than the average.

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In the event you find that the plaintiff should recover either actual or nominal damages, and if you further find that the acts of the defendant were with a wanton disregard of the plaintiff's rights, or that the acts were reckless, or oppressive, or fraudulent, or maliciously intentional, then you may award punitive damages.

[If you find that the plaintiff should recover compensation for damages, and if you further find that the conduct of the defendant was [malicious] [willful] [reckless] [wanton] [grossly negligent] [fraudulent] [in bad faith], then you may award punitive damages.]

Such additional damages are awarded for the limited purposes of punishment and to deter others from the commission of like offenses. The amount of punitive damages must be based on reason and justice, taking into account all of the circumstances including the nature of the wrong and such aggravating and mitigating circumstances as may be shown. The amount awarded, if any, must be reasonably related to the actual damages and injury and not disproportionate to the circumstances.

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Faithful performance by you of your duties is vital to the administration of justice. Any verdict must represent the considered judgment of each juror. In order to return a verdict, it is necessary that each juror agree to it. In other words, your verdict must be unanimous.

It is your duty as jurors to consult with one another and to deliberate in an effort to reach an agreement if you can do so without giving up your individual judgment. Each of you must decide the case for yourself, but only after an impartial consideration of all the evidence in the case with your fellow jurors. In the course of your deliberations do not hesitate to re-examine your own views and to change your opinion, if you are convinced it is erroneous. But do not surrender your honest conviction as to the weight or effect of the evidence solely because of the opinion of your fellow jurors or for the mere purpose of returning a verdict.

Remember at all times that you are not partisans. You are judges; judges of the facts. Your sole interest is to seek the truth from the evidence in the case.

JURY INSTRUCTION NO. _____

Upon retiring to the jury room, you should first elect a foreperson who will preside over your deliberations and will be your spokesperson here in court.

A verdict form has been prepared for your convenience. You will take this verdict form to the jury room and when you have reached unanimous agreement as to your verdict, you will have your foreperson fill in, date, and sign it. The foreperson will then notify the court security officer that you have reached a verdict.

If, during your deliberations, you should desire to communicate with me, please put your message or question in writing signed by the foreperson and pass the note to the court security officer who will bring it to my attention. I will then respond as promptly as possible, either in writing or by having you returned to the courtroom. I caution you, however, with regard to any message or question you might send that you should never state your numerical division on any issue.