

# PERSONAL INJURY POST

820 S. Main St., McAllen, TX 78501  
(956) 587-5833  
www.go-lawfirm.com



Ricardo A. Garcia

Lino H. Ochoa

Romeo Rendon III

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

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## Changing the Way We See the World — By the Way We Listen

### Why Listening Can Change the World

At our law firm, people often joke that I'm the "office psychologist" because everyone vents to me. I often joke in response, "Hey, if this law thing doesn't work out, I'll be your psychologist for real."

If I'm honest, I'm only half-joking! I love the fact that people feel comfortable enough to sit on my office's sofa and talk to me about their problems. This treatment isn't unusual for me, either — I've always been a good listener. Perhaps that's why, while considering topics for this month, World Listening Day on July 18 stuck out to me so much.

Consider this: Listening will almost always have a bigger positive impact on the people in your life than you expect. Have you ever talked to someone when they remember a tiny detail about your life that you mentioned six months ago or even a year ago? As it turns out, I'm that guy for a lot of people. Growing up, I was a quiet and introspective kid. I have always had a great memory, so picking up on little details and facts came naturally. As I started opening up and socializing more, listening and being receptive to others became an important part of how I communicated with others.

You rarely learn the impact of listening intentionally — you learn it by "accident," by the way someone smiles or thanks you. Remembering someone's favorite color or the fact that their dog died a few weeks ago can help people feel heard, seen, and sometimes even special. That's the real power of listening. We can reassure people they're not alone. It might sound cliché, but I truly believe that listening makes the world a better place.

That's why I'm extremely grateful to practice in the field of law that I do. When it comes to personal injury law, clients often come to my office during the most tragic points of their lives. Unfortunately, many personal injury lawyers can become a little desensitized to these cases due to seeing them every single day. Some may gloss over the seemingly common details of cases or not consider them closely enough. There are plenty of cases where I think, "Wow, if I hadn't paid close attention to every detail of the client's story, I might've missed important evidence for the case."



I can give you an example. Last year, we settled a complex fire case; it was a horrific incident where a space heater, bought from a pawn shop, started a house fire and killed several family members. We took important depositions from the manager of the pawn shop who sold the item, but we began to get the feeling she was being less than honest.

Luckily, I remembered some comments from when we'd done an inspection of the store. In real time during the deposition, I pulled up previously made statements, photos, and other pieces of evidence and quietly showed them to the partner who was conducting the deposition. With those quick reminders, he was able to ask additional questions that resulted in the witness contradicting herself and ultimately correcting her testimony.

Although I think I'd enjoy being a psychologist, I'd certainly miss our absolutely phenomenal team at Garcia & Ochoa! So, the unofficial "office psychiatrist" isn't going anywhere. And if you decide to trust us with your case, I can assure you we'll always be there when you need us most. Our hearts and ears are open to you.

Thanks so much for reading! Enjoy your summer, and I'll catch you next time.

*— Romeo Rendon*

# STAY COOL THIS SUMMER

## *Educate Yourself on Heat-Related Illnesses*



When thinking about extreme and deadly weather, most people conjure up images of massive tornadoes in the Midwest or hurricanes and flooding in the Southeast. But you might be surprised to learn that the deadliest extreme weather event is excessive heat. In fact, according to a study from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), heat causes more deaths each year than floods, lightning, tornadoes, and hurricanes combined. Since 2020 was the second warmest year on record and all the other years in the top 10 have occurred since 2005, it's time to wise up about heat-related illnesses.

### Heat-Related Illnesses and Risk Factors

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), heat-related illnesses are caused by "exposure to extreme heat where the body becomes unable to properly cool, resulting in a rapid rise in body temperature."

There are several kinds of heat-related illnesses. The least severe are heat rashes, sunburn, and heat cramps, and the most serious are heat exhaustion and heat stroke. While anyone can experience these illnesses if they overexert themselves in hot weather, some groups are more at risk than others, including:

- Children under the age of 4 and adults over the age of 65
- People with preexisting medical conditions, such as diabetes or heart disease
- People who are overweight
- People taking certain kinds of medication
- Individuals who are intoxicated or drink excessively

### Symptoms to Watch Out For

Both heat exhaustion and heat stroke have many of the same symptoms, including headaches, dizziness, nausea or vomiting, and passing out. But other symptoms help differentiate the two. Heat stroke victims will have hot, red skin that may be dry or damp, and they'll likely have a fast, strong pulse. By contrast, victims of heat exhaustion will have cold, pale, and clammy skin and a fast but weak pulse.

Heat stroke is a medical emergency requiring professional medical attention immediately. You should also seek medical help for anyone exhibiting the above symptoms who is also throwing up or whose symptoms are getting worse or last longer than one hour. For a complete list of symptoms and treatment for all heat-related illnesses, visit **CDC.gov/disasters/extremeheat/warning.html**.

Stay cool this summer and prevent heat-related illnesses by seeking shade or staying indoors on hot days, avoiding exerting yourself in the heat, and drinking plenty of water!

## AVOID A FIREWORKS ACCIDENT!

Did you know that sparklers burn at nearly 2,000 degrees F? July isn't just the month of America's Independence Day; it's also National Fireworks Safety Month! Even though fireworks are a lot of fun and may be legal in your neighborhood, it's crucial that everyone remembers fireworks aren't safe. They must be handled with extreme caution. Here are four fireworks safety tips to keep in mind.

### No. 1: Keep a bucket of water and fire extinguisher nearby to put out fires.

Fireworks start an average of 18,500 fires every year. If you're setting off fireworks this month, buy a fire extinguisher — its initial \$20–\$40 cost may save your home from thousands of dollars worth of damage. Also, it'll keep your family safe when you need it most!

### No. 2: Make sure all children are a safe distance from fireworks.

Did you know that in 2017, over 50% of fireworks injuries were to children and young adults under the age of 20 years old? Make sure that adults are the only ones allowed to set off your fireworks. If your children do play with sparklers, also ensure they're under parental supervision at all times. As previously mentioned, a sparkler's incredibly high temperatures can cause serious burns or set fires.

## WHY 'SLIP AND FALL' CASES ARE IMPORTANT

Sometimes people hear the term "slip and fall" about a lawsuit and they think, "Not another frivolous court case." However, slip-and-fall lawsuits can be quite severe. Especially as you age, falling can be an incident that permanently affects your health.

Property owners must be held accountable for leaving their public spaces in dangerous conditions; this includes torn carpeting, uneven flooring, poor lighting, narrow stairs, or unmarked wet floors.



### No. 3: Always follow the directions to your fireworks.

Fireworks may be fun, but the directions must always be followed. For general, important guidelines, remember: Light only one firework at a time and always at a safe distance. Never hold lit fireworks in your hands and never light them indoors. Also, make sure your fireworks are always used away from people, houses, and flammable materials. You don't want fireworks to hurt someone by surprise.

### No. 4: Don't play with fireworks while under the influence.

If you've been drinking or taking drugs — even if you're just on the second vaccine shot — you may want to reconsider preparing or lighting any fireworks yourself. Fireworks aren't a toy to be reckoned with, and they require keen awareness to keep you healthy and safe. When in doubt, leave the fireworks to the professionals.

Thanks for reading, everyone. No matter how you celebrate the Fourth of July this year, we hope you'll have a wonderful, safe celebration!



#### Our Case Facts

Recently, we had a case where a client walked into a popular breakfast restaurant chain and fell as a result of wet flooring. There was no sign, and she suffered tremendous injuries to her left hip and right arm. She couldn't carry anything — which made an independent lifestyle much more difficult for her. Also, she endured serious back pain as well as left knee, right ankle, and shoulder pain.

For the client, these injuries would require a few months of rehabilitation, which would incur significant bills. It was only right to confront the restaurant to ensure the future of her health was provided for.

#### The Case Results

How do you prove that a property owner was negligent? As an attorney, we try to prove three things: (1) the owner/possessor created the condition, (2) the owner/possessor knew the condition existed and negligently failed to correct it, and (3) the condition existed for such a length of time that the owner/possessor should have discovered and corrected it prior to the slip-and-fall incident in question.

Thankfully, we were able to prove negligence, and our client received her compensation to ensure financial safety during her recovery.

These cases help ensure the world is a little safer. So, if you get caught in a severe slip and fall, you're not alone. Don't hesitate to give our expert team at Garcia & Ochoa a call!

## MEXICAN CORN SALAD

Inspired by JoCooks.com

### INGREDIENTS

- 4 cups of fresh corn, cut from 5 cobs
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1/2 red bell pepper, chopped
- 1/2 red onion, diced
- 6 green onions, chopped
- 1 jalapeno, diced
- 1/2 avocado, cubed
- 1/4 cup fresh-squeezed lime juice
- 1/2 tsp ground cumin
- 1/2 tsp smoked paprika
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 2 tbsp sour cream
- 2 tbsp mayonnaise
- 1/2 cup fresh cilantro, chopped
- 1/2 cup cotija or feta cheese, crumbled

### DIRECTIONS

1. In a cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat, add oil and corn. Cook, stirring occasionally, for 3–5 minutes or until corn starts to char.
2. Add the corn to a large bowl and let cool for 5 minutes, then add the remaining ingredients and stir together until well combined. Taste and adjust seasoning.
3. The salad pairs well with grilled entrees and can be refrigerated in an airtight container for up to 4 days.

## BE INSPIRED

**"THE WORK GOES ON,  
THE CAUSE ENDURES, THE  
HOPE STILL LIVES, AND THE  
DREAMS SHALL NEVER DIE."**

**—EDWARD KENNEDY**



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## *Is 'Hammocking' a Better Way to Sleep?*

### (Theoretical) Benefits of Sleeping While Swinging

Hammocking has become a popular leisure activity within the last 5–10 years, with the global hammock market growing about 17% between 2017 and 2021. As fun as it is, though, could hammocking be more than that? Could it be a better way to sleep, not just on camping trips or in the park, but in our homes, too?

The short answer is that the data is inconclusive. More studies need to be done on the health benefits of sleeping in hammocks, and the studies that do exist lack sufficient sample sizes for meaningful conclusions. With that massive caveat out of the way, however, here are a few potential benefits of sleeping in a hammock.

#### **Protection From Bugs**

This benefit really only matters if you're sleeping outdoors (though, in theory, sleeping in a hammock could mean a decreased risk of dust mites). If you sleep on the ground, bugs will have easier access to you. Flying insects can still bother hammockers, but a good bug net for your hammock can fix that problem.

#### **Pressure Point Relief**

A good mattress can reduce pressure on the shoulders, back, and butt, while a bad mattress can do the opposite. Some hammock advocates claim that a hammock's more flexible surface means pressure is spread more equally across all parts of the body. However, this benefit is purely theoretical and more study is needed to confirm the hypothesis.

#### **Deeper Sleep**

According to a study from 2011 where 12 men took two 45-minute naps — one in a regular bed and one in a swinging bed — results showed the men fell asleep faster in the swinging bed and that they had a longer light sleep before they entered a deep sleep. However, because the size of this study was so small, its conclusions need more verification.

Until more data emerges to confirm what so many hammock enthusiasts already claim to know, you can still rest knowing that hammocking isn't harmful; in fact, it's really relaxing and fun.