



THE BASSETT FIRM
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Passion. Preparation. Persistence.

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THREE WAYS CLAIMS ADJUSTERS CAN REDUCE LEGAL FEES

With the United States' economy having "fallen off the cliff" (according to Warren Buffet), now more than ever companies need to be looking at ways to reduce their costs. With this in mind, The Bassett Firm wanted to give you some tips on how you can *reduce* the amount of money you pay to lawyers handling your cases.

1. Document, Document, Document

Document everything that you do on a file. That way, if the case goes into litigation, no one is wondering what has been done on the file. This prevents repeating tasks and, more importantly, prevents your attorneys from having to do things that have already been done. And remember this – the less your attorneys do on a file, the cheaper your legal bills are going to be.

2. Make Your Pictures Count

Remember the movie *My Cousin Vinny*? (If you haven't seen it, do so. If that movie doesn't make you laugh out loud, check your pulse.)

Well taken pictures can literally be worth thousands of dollars. Don't be frugal – once an accident scene changes, it is gone forever. Besides, often times you won't know how significant a picture is until the case progresses.

Make sure that the attorney handling the file is given copies of the photographs. If they are not included in claim file materials, guess what? They attorney is going to go out (on *your nickel*) and take another complete set of photographs. Again, that is money you don't need to spend.

One final note – if possible, photograph the claimant (not at the scene of the accident or with any obvious injuries). A good photograph of the claimant can help surveillance later down the road. The last thing you want to do is have your lawyer try to conduct surveillance on a Plaintiff who is described as a white male in his mid 40's with dark hair. That narrows the field down to about 1,784,362 possible people in the DFW Metroplex.

3. Make Your Recorded Statements Count

When you are taking a recorded statement, please get clean, clear answers. “Uh huh” and “Uh-uh” are really pretty useless. The problem is that it provides huge *wiggle room* to the witness.

Also, please get some form of identifying information that your attorney can use to track down a witness at a later date. Social security number, date of birth, driver’s license number, or next of kin are all great. Providing this information in a recorded statement is going to save a ton of time should your attorney need to run down a witness on the eve of trial.

Have an outline and stick to it. An outline is not a script; rather, it is a “go by” to help you make sure you don’t miss anything when taking a recorded statement. The last thing you want to do is spend weeks or months getting a recorded statement set up, take the statement, and 15 minutes after you have hung up realize you didn’t ask a very key question.

A well taken recorded statement can be very helpful in defending a case. A poorly taken recorded statement means that your attorney is going to have to go out and *re-interview* that witness (assuming it is not the claimant) and guess what that does to your legal bills – you guessed it, it *increases* them. There is no need to spend money for a lawyer to go do something that can be done right the first time.

CONCLUSION

There they are – three simple ways that you can *reduce* the legal expenses on your files. Document everything that you do so that no one reinvents the wheel. Take good photographs so that your attorney can better evaluate the case and doesn’t have to spend your money to go out and taken another set of photographs. Finally, make your recorded statements count.

In forthcoming issues of *The Bassett Bulletin*, we will occasionally have other tips for you in ways you can reduce your legal fees.

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