



**NC WORKERS'
COMPENSATION
SIMPLIFIED**

WRITTEN BY REID ACREE

What Others Have To Say About Reid



Michael Allison

13 reviews

★★★★★ 3 months ago

The best ,everyone who has been injured should meet with him!



Posted by Joshua

January 21, 2020

Workers Compensation

I contacted and hired Mr. Acree based upon the referral of another attorney who couldn't take my case due to a conflict of interest. Mr. Acree was very professional and listened to everything that my wife and I explained to him. My case spanned numerous years and had some interesting aspects to it. Mr. Acree has provided us a great service and helped us come to a resolution that we are very happy with. I would recommend him to anyone seeking assistance with a workers compensation claim. He was very knowledgeable about the entire process and helped to explain and answer all of our questions.

[Less ^](#)

Hired attorney



Donna Marie Childress

6 reviews

★★★★★ a year ago

Reid Acree is an outstanding attorney he does his very best for his clients. He totally walked with me through my workers comp case. I had never been in this situation before. He is not only intelligent but he also cared about my well being. If you are looking for the best workers comp attorney I recommend him highly. He won my case.

Thank you Reid!

Donna Childress Hayes



Posted by Laura
January 11, 2020

Professional Yet Personable

My husband and I hired Mr. Acree to handle a complicated social security disability case. Mr. Acree took the time to fully understand what had transpired prior to us hiring him and always kept us informed of the status of the case. He represented us at the hearing and we received a fully favorable decision. I would strongly recommend Reid Acree if you are looking for an honest, hard-working and caring lawyer!

[Less ^](#)

Hired attorney

Reid's representation of me in my workers' compensation case was beyond anything I imagined. I was being mistreated by both the WC insurance company and my company employers. Reid took my calls and addressed my issues immediately whether it be a weekend or 9 PM at night. His cell phone was always on. He is an expert at what he does! Reid negotiated a settlement of 5 times what I expected or is the norm for my injury. If you are in need of a WC attorney, Reid is your man!

Truth be told,

Mr. Mark L.



Larry Bolen

Local Guide · 22 reviews · 4 photos

★★★★★ 2 years ago

Reid was my attorney 12 years ago did awesome job.. Then 10 years later hurt again 1st place i went. He helped me get my social security disability my employers disability retirement as well as my WC Its been 3+ years hes had my back against the system.

He even assisted a family member in getting their SSI that had been repeatedly turned down for 4 and a half years.



Posted by Sherrie
January 3, 2020

First Legal Experience

While doing research on asbestos/mesothelioma for my dad I came in contact with Reid along with a couple of other attorneys. This was our first experience in the legal arena and I felt like this group of attorneys that worked with us was honest and looked out for our best interest.

Hired attorney

5 Stars!!

I was quite impressed from the start with Mr. Acree's level of professionalism while handling my WC case. Throughout the process, he put my mind at ease by explaining things in a clear, personable manner. Truly, I felt my best interest was his main objective. I could not be more pleased with the results he, and his team, produced for me. I believe anyone in the area with a WC claim should give Reid Acree a call.

Thanks,

Michael



Devin Thomas

6 reviews

★★★★★ 2 years ago

Great Attorney!!! Great staff. Can't say enough good things about Reid. I recommend everyone I know who's been hurt at work to Reid.



Posted by Carl
January 2, 2020

M. Reid Acree, Jr. Attorney

Mr. Acree was very professional yet personable, as well as diligent, thorough, timely, and accurate in his assessment of the issues involved in my case and was exceptionally capable in explaining to me what would be most likely to favorably resolve my legal problem in a manner that provides the best outcome for me as well as the other party involved. He was able to get a favorable resolution for me that left the other party and me on satisfactory terms with each other. I couldn't have asked for a better result. His kind and personable attitude did more to help the other party and me than anything else. He is a credit to his profession.

[Less](#) ^

Hired attorney ⓘ



Elaine Ellis

3 reviews

★★★★★ 6 years ago

Mr. Acree helps resolves all matters in a professional manner.

Dear Mr. Acree,

Thank you just doesn't seem enough for all of your efforts and diligence in assisting me in getting my disability and SS! You have stood by me through a very long process. Some people thought I was crazy choosing a lawyer without ever meeting you. I just knew in my heart that it was one of the few great judgments I have made. It was great to finally meet you face-to-face. Thank you so much!

Sincerely,

Barb Wood



Mark Allen

1 review

★★★★★ 2 years ago

Mr. Acree is a VERY knowledgeable, understanding, and caring attorney and person. I HIGHLY recommend him!!

Most Recent Customer Review



Jack T.

★★★★★

12/11/2017

Reid is a brilliant workers' comp attorney. His staff is caring, intelligent, and diligent. Just an all around great firm.

★★★★★

Posted by William (Bill)

January 2, 2020

Client

Mr Acree (Reid) handled a asbestos exposure case for me and did an excellent job of informing and educating me on me of what to expect. Mr Acree also worked in my best interest on all accounts. During this time we on my part have become friends in many ways. I never had to wonder what was happening because of the shared information and attention he provided me as well as attention from his staff, for this I am forever grateful.

Hired attorney ⓘ



Joel Woodhull

12 reviews

★★★★★ a year ago

Great person straight forward fights for you



Mary Decker

24 reviews

★★★★★ 2 years ago

Had a consultation with him this morning. Not sure that I will use him at this time however, I found him to be very knowledgeable and very kind and personable.

And then there is this person (who called Reid at home at 9:30 PM when he had just walked in the door. His dogs needed to go out)... and obviously the communication level of both parties was questionable at best. 😄



Brenda H.

Concord, NC

👥 0 friends

★ 1 review

★★★★★ 2/2/2017

🏆 First to Review

Don't use the guy. Very poor communication skills. You will never be able to reach him until you call numerous times. Once you do, he ask you to hold while he speaks to his dog for a long goodbye, long goodbye no joke. Then proceeds to ask if I left him a message using a squeaky voice or a husky voice. Wow!

👤 Useful 😄 Funny 2 😎 Cool

★★★★★

Posted by Michael
January 2, 2020

Genuine and Caring

I met with Mr. Reid Acree Jr. several years ago as he came highly recommended from another attorney to handle my case.. Mr. Acree is a man who will give you a firm handshake and look you in the eye and he is Very knowledgeable and a straight shooter. You will not be disappointed he will work hard for you and treat you like family.

Hired attorney 📌

What His Peers Think Of Him

★★★★★ **Workers Compensation**

Peer Review for [Mr. Milton R. Acree Jr.](#) by a Partner | July 23, 2012

★★★★★ **Workers Compensation**

Peer Review for [Mr. Milton R. Acree Jr.](#) by a Principal | March 16, 2011

I have had the opportunity to work with Reid many times over the last 8 years. In each instance he does an outstanding job of communicating with his clients and opposing counsel.

★★★★★ **Workers Compensation Appeals**

Peer Review for [Mr. Milton R. Acree Jr.](#) by a Sole Practitioner | March 08, 2011

★★★★★ **Workers Compensation**

Peer Review for [Mr. Milton R. Acree Jr.](#) by a Partner | March 06, 2011

I believe Reid is an excellent advocate for his client and is also a very reasoned and realistic attorney knowing when it is best for his client to settle a case or take it to a hearing

★★★★★ **Workers Compensation**

Peer Review for [Mr. Milton R. Acree Jr.](#) by a Sole Practitioner | March 04, 2011

★★★★★ **Workers Compensation**

Peer Review for [Mr. Milton R. Acree Jr.](#) by a Partner | March 02, 2011

★★★★★ **Workers Compensation**

Peer Review for [Mr. Milton R. Acree Jr.](#) by a Partner | February 24, 2011

★★★★★ **Personal Injury**

Peer Review for [Mr. Milton R. Acree Jr.](#) by a Partner | February 24, 2011

★★★★★ **Workers Compensation**

Peer Review for [Mr. Milton R. Acree Jr.](#) by a Managing Partner | February 23, 2011

I have worked with Reid for over 15 years and found him to possess the highest legal knowledge and ethics

These are all old reviews.

LionsEdge, Inc. Publisher
Cover Design: Scott Steele
Production and Composition: LionsEdge Publishing

© 2020 Reid Acree

THE BORING VERSION: All Rights Reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law.

You Have Permission to Pass This Book On, In Its Entirety, To Everyone You Know.

THE FUN VERSION: The boring lawyer didn't like my fun version. His direct quote was "blah, blah, blah, blah and blah."

LionsEdge Inc.

<https://lionsedge.io/>

scott@lionsedge.io



Reid Acree – The Defender of the People

"I'm a 59-year old North Carolina Lawyer that was unhappy because I only represented corporations and insurance companies going against people. Twenty-two years ago, I went through some spiritual changes and switched to only representing injured workers. That has made all the difference."



The one thing you always need to remember, it is YOUR case, not the lawyer's case. The lawyer works for you. You DO NOT work for the lawyer.

Table of Contents

[NC Workers' Compensation Law-What the Heck is it?](#)

[Medical Benefits](#)

[Lost Wages, known as "Temporary Total Disability" \(TTD\) Benefits](#)

[Permanent Partial Disability Rating](#)

[Organ Damage Benefits](#)

[500 Weeks of Death Benefits](#)

[All Care and Benefits Fit into One of These "Three Doors"](#)

[So, What's Not Behind the Three Doors?](#)

[Brief History of Workers' Comp](#)

[You Were Injured at Work](#)

[10 Reasons To Hire A Lawyer For Work-Related Injuries Or Diseases](#)

[How To Determine If You Need To Call A Lawyer](#)

[How To Tell A Good Lawyer From A Bad Lawyer](#)

[What To Expect Once You Have Hired Me](#)

[Questions And Answers With Reid](#)

[Information to Give the Lawyer About Your Work-Related Injury or Disease](#)

[Occupational Disease - Click here to fill out the form.](#)

[Work-Related Injury - Click here to fill out the form.](#)

[Documents To Have When You Call Or Visit The Lawyer](#)

[How Long Does It Take To Resolve A Workers' Comp Claim?](#)

[Who Is Reid Acree?](#)

[Workers' Compensation Forms](#)

[Employee Forms](#)

NC Workers' Compensation Law-What the Heck is it?

The way I explain NC workers' compensation law is that I compare it to the game show "Let's Make a Deal." (I'm not making light of a worker's injuries and it's not fun and games but the show offers a great illustration for understanding NC workers' comp.)



Let's Make a Deal. I always loved that show as a kid and would watch as the hostess Carol Merrill stood on stage and pointed to prize doors numbered 1, 2 and 3. The game show host Monty Hall would invite folks to come down from the audience, wearing a clown outfit or dressed like a box of Tide or a banana. Remember? Monty would get to know the contestants a bit and ask them to pick a door to win the prize behind that door. (But after the contestant picked and before the door was opened, Monty would present the box on a stand and ask if the contestant wanted to choose the box instead. (Well, I never wanted the contestant to pick the box because it usually contained a diamond ring, and as a 12-year old boy, I didn't have much use for one of those).

In the game show, you could only keep what was behind one door and if you picked correctly you won. If not, you lost. So, if you picked the ski boat, you won; if you picked the trip to Hawaii, you won; and if you picked the can of spam, you lost.

Think of North Carolina workers' compensation benefits as being behind three doors.

The **first door** is medical care – anything and everything that's medically necessary to affect a cure or lessen a period of disability.

The **second door** is lost wages, paid at two-thirds of the injured worker's average weekly wage.

The **third door** is for a permanent partial disability rating to the injured part of the body. A disability rating typically only applies if there is an orthopedic injury. If the injury is one to an organ, then that third door would be for the value of "loss or damage to an important internal or external organ."

If, sadly enough, the case involves a death, then the worker's next of kin can get 500 weeks of death benefits, but more on that later.

The beauty of our so-called game show of "Let's Make a Deal for NC Workers' Compensation benefits" is that you get to pick the benefits behind all three doors and you get to keep the benefits behind all three doors.

So, let's discuss each of these three categories of benefits.

Medical Benefits

Medical benefits are paid at no cost to you. They are “first dollar benefits,” meaning that you DO NOT pay any deductibles, co-pays or out-of-pocket expenses. Medical benefits include everything from doctors’ visits, diagnostic testing such as MRIs or CT scans, prescription medications, crutches, braces, physical therapy, injections, surgery, postsurgical care, additional physical therapy, continued office visits with the specialist, and again, anything that is “reasonably necessary to affect a cure or lessen a period of disability.” Medical benefits could include an orthopedic bed, an orthopedic seat, YMCA membership for water therapy and the like. Any medical condition that “flows from the original injury” should be considered compensable and therefore, medical care for that condition should also be paid. (This, of course, can get complicated regarding proof of causation issues).

Lost Wages, known as “Temporary Total Disability” (TTD) Benefits

Door number two concerns lost wages. Workers’ compensation premiums are calculated based on a percentage of payroll; therefore, the wage benefits available to the injured worker are calculated at two-thirds of the average weekly wage the worker was earning prior to the injury. Using simple math, if the worker is earning \$900 per week, then the two thirds “comp rate” is \$600, and his or her weekly TTD check should be \$600. One of the advantages of workers’ compensation benefits is that the two-thirds’

weekly TTD is a tax-free benefit. Generally, most folks pay one-third of their income in taxes so this should work out to where the injured worker is receiving about the same take home pay.



Benefits used to be paid for a lifetime but in 2011, our conservative legislature in North Carolina limited the TTD payments to 500 weeks, unless it is a catastrophic loss or unless the worker's attorney can prove within a certain time prior to the end of the 500'th week, that the worker has a total loss of wage earning capacity. (It's very complicated – remember this is workers' compensation simplified).



Permanent Partial Disability Rating

Door number three is the permanent partial disability (“PPD”) rating. This may sound gross but each “orthopedic” body part has a certain number of weeks assigned to it for a “complete loss.” For example, the back is 300 weeks; the leg is 200 weeks; the foot (or below the knee) is 144 weeks; the arm (above the elbow) is 240 weeks and the hand is 200 weeks. There are also ratings for fingers which I shall not go into. Under the North Carolina Rating Guide, there is supposed to be an automatic 10% PPD awarded due to the invasion of a joint space during surgery. Unfortunately, many doctors feel that their care is so good (or they are so beholden to insurance

carriers) that they do not correctly assign PPD ratings. There is a whole other ball of yarn about rules and issues to consider for second opinions about the value of the rating and what, if any, additional treatment is necessary. Again, this is a summary. If you have further questions, [call me](#).

Typically, the injured worker cannot collect both ongoing weekly wage loss under door number two AND receive payment for the PPD “rating behind door number three.” Instead, the law says that the worker gets the more munificent, or greater, remedy. So, for example if the PPD rating is worth \$18,000 and it looks like the worker is going to be out of work for a year and one half, paid at \$600 per week, then the value of that 76 weeks of TTD would be \$45,600. That value is obviously worth more than the \$18,000 rating. (One of the biggest pitfalls facing injured workers is that an adjuster will try to settle the case entirely for the value of the PPD rating; don’t let that happen to you).

Organ Damage Benefits

Also, under door three, is a discretionary award of up to \$20,000 for loss or damage to an important internal or external organ. Yes, for us men out there, the statute does say “external organ.” Again, this may sound crude but the statute does allow for recovery of up to \$20,000 for a damaged organ. One well-known attorney was able to combine the value of multiple internal organs, valued at up to \$20,000 each, for a much greater recovery to the injured worker than his ongoing wage loss. Unbelievably, under the statute, the brain is valued at the same amount as the spleen or gallbladder.

(Of course, if the brain is significantly damaged then you're not going to be looking at organ damage benefits but instead, ongoing wage loss).

500 Weeks of Death Benefits

Under the Act, the next of kin of a deceased worker can receive 500 weeks of benefits at that two-thirds comp rate. So, if a death occurs and it is proven to be compensable under the Workers' Compensation Act, and the worker was earning \$900 per week (such that the two-thirds comp rate is \$600 per week), then \$600 multiplied by 500 weeks is \$300,000. If the benefits are paid to a widow or widower, they are not converted to present value. If the benefits go to next of kin such as children, the benefits are converted to present value.

All Care and Benefits Fit into One of These "Three Doors"

Most every type of benefit can reasonably be understood by placing it in one of those three "doors." Additional examples would be funeral expense benefits of up to \$10,000, attendant care benefits, (to provide care for a loved one during an illness), mileage reimbursement benefits (to and from doctors' offices), reimbursement for out-of-pocket prescription drugs during a period of inability to obtain prescribed medicines, medical

equipment, a 10% penalty available for a willful violation of a safety statute, and again, anything that can be proven to be reasonably necessary to help a person heal or lessen their period of disability.



So, What's Not Behind the Three Doors?

When I meet with injured workers and their families, I draw out the three doors of "Let's Make a Deal." I show them the medical care column, the lost wage column and the permanent partial disability column. I ask them to look and see what is NOT on the page? Some folks get it. Most folks don't. I then mentioned that pain-and-suffering, loss of enjoyment of life, emotional distress and punitive damages are not on the list of available

benefits. Most folks then look at me and say well, can we sue the company for those benefits? Unfortunately, I have to tell them that no, those benefits are not available because of what is known as the “workers’ compensation bar” (or prohibition). Simply stated, if a claim is against the worker’s employer then a civil suit is barred except for an extremely limited and rare circumstance (not discussed here).

At that point in the conversation, the worker and their family members usually become extremely frustrated upon learning this information. I explain to them a brief history of workers’ compensation law and WHY these benefits are not available.



Brief History of Workers' Comp

Workers' comp was first established in New York State as a result of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire of 1911. In that fire, women and children garment workers were burned to death/maimed/crippled when they could not get out of the burning building because the owners had locked all exit doors. After the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, the New York Legislature met and decided there needed to be a safety net of benefits available to workers and their families due to work – related injuries. They created a “safety net,” or again - “three doors” of medical care, lost wages and a disability rating to help workers be able to support their family while recovering and then getting back to work. In the sake of death, the death benefits were to provide the worker’s family with monetary benefits to help soften the loss of the worker’s income.



The argument over establishing a safety net of benefits was heated. Workers' groups wanted the workers and their loved ones to be able to recover for pain-and-suffering, loss for enjoyment of life, emotional distress

medical causation, whether a worker's family could get paid for providing services to the injured worker (attendant care), what constitutes disability, what constitutes wage loss, what constitutes an injurious exposure for an occupational disease and virtually everything you could think of that an injured worker can face. Because there is a natural push/pull between conservatives who don't want to provide injured workers with benefits and workers' rights groups who want their workers to recover and be able to support their families while returning to work, virtually every aspect of the Act has been litigated. There are lawyers, lobbying groups and entire Employer/Manufacturing Associations in North Carolina whose sole purpose is to eliminate workers' compensation benefits for injured workers. Doing so would increase the almighty profits for their employer clients and screw the working "man (and woman!)"

So, when an injured worker and their family members look at me like I have horns or that I am crazy to explain this, I tell them that it is a legislative problem and that unfortunately, their legislators in North Carolina have done all they can to eliminate and or reduce benefits for injured workers and to stack the court with judges who traditionally rule in favor of corporations and against them—the injured worker.

I love to talk about this stuff – if you want more information, please [call me](#) and I will gladly fill you in.



You Were Injured at Work



If you have been injured at work. Always follow the 5 steps listed below.

First

Report your injury to your employer and seek out appropriate medical treatment.

Your employer will likely have a poster in the break room telling you which doctor to see for a work-related injury. If you don't see one, ask the employer whom to go see. If it is a serious injury and the employer is jerking you around, go to the closest urgent care, emergency room or even to your own doctor.

Second

Tell your healthcare provider that your injury is related to your work and the name of your employer. This information allows the health care provider to bill treatment as a workers' compensation claim.

Third

As soon as possible, once you have seen a medical professional, again inform an appropriate manager of your employer or the owner of your company that you have experienced a work-related accident. If you can personally report your injury, do so. If you are unable to report your injury

because of your medical condition, have a family member, friend or health care provider notify your employer of the injury as soon as possible.

Fourth

As soon as practical after the accident, and within thirty days, give written notice to your employer. A simple written statement giving the date of the accident and a brief description of the injury is all that is necessary. If you cannot write the letter, have a friend or family member write it for you and send it to the employer. Keep a copy of the letter for your records.

Fifth

Follow your physician's instructions for medical treatment. The goal of the workers' compensation system in North Carolina is to ensure that you get good health care to restore you as nearly as possible to the health and ability to work that you had prior to your injury.

Following these five simple steps is designed to ensure that your injury is properly reported, you receive appropriate health care quickly and that your employer can initiate workers' compensation medical benefits. Unfortunately workers' compensation is "big business" and you may find that your claim is denied outright or that even if your claim is accepted, the medical care is delayed.



10 Reasons To Hire A Lawyer For Work-Related Injuries Or Diseases



In my experience, there are ten (10) occasions when folks hire a lawyer. They are common sense “friction points” or points of conflict when many workers realize that they need legal advice. In my experience, they are as follows:



they are scared about their ability to heal properly and continue working to support the family.

1. When the worker realizes that he or she is in uncharted territory and wants the best medical and financial protection. Some folks, from the very beginning, realize that workers’ compensation claims are very complicated, the insurance adjusters do not have their best interests at heart, and



2. When the claim has been wrongfully denied. This point of conflict is obvious. No one feels more unjustly treated than when an insurance carrier has said that the injured party's work-injury has been denied. (Not all claims are payable, and you need to call a lawyer to find out).

3. When the worker cannot get the adjuster to respond to his injuries and need for medical care. This is an obvious period of frustration. Many injuries just simply CAN'T WAIT. What if it's a closed head injury, internal bleeding, fracture or tear needing immediate attention or some other condition equally as urgent? Insurance companies can take weeks or months to decide to accept or deny a claim.



4. When the worker is not getting any lost wage checks and the adjuster won't respond. It's hard to feed your family, pay the mortgage and other bills when no money is coming in. Insurance adjusters individually may go to church, believe in God and even raise children, but they have so many files to handle, that they typically have no concern about your family situation.



**WHAT
THE
HECK?**

5. When the worker is getting lost wage checks, but they are not correctly two thirds of the pre-injury wage. Employers and insurance carriers very often pay the worker two-thirds of his base pay and refuse to consider overtime pay, bonuses, production pay, etc. This, of course, is wrong but the insurance

carrier will typically start paying a base rate and it could take months to get it corrected.



6. When the worker has been getting lost wage checks and suddenly the checks stop coming. This could be for a whole lot of reasons including a slack adjuster, or that they “fell off the system” (meaning that the computer stopped generating a payment notice).

7. When the insurance company has filed a motion to terminate the worker’s wage replacement checks. When a carrier has been paying wage replacement checks known as “temporary total disability,” there are certain instances where the carrier can file a motion for termination of those checks. However, the carrier must jump through certain legal hoops in order to accomplish the termination of checks. It is not unusual for a worker to think that everything has been going well and suddenly receive a motion to terminate those lost wage checks.



8. When the worker has received medical care but is just not getting any better. There are very specific rules for receiving second opinions regarding treatment. Insurance carriers will typically ignore the worker’s ongoing complaints of pain or lack of healing. It is very rare that an insurance carrier will acknowledge that a person is not healing well and will authorize an examination by another physician without a lawyer having to get involved.

9. When the insurance adjuster treats the injured worker very rudely and acts as if they “do not matter.” I have had any number of claims when

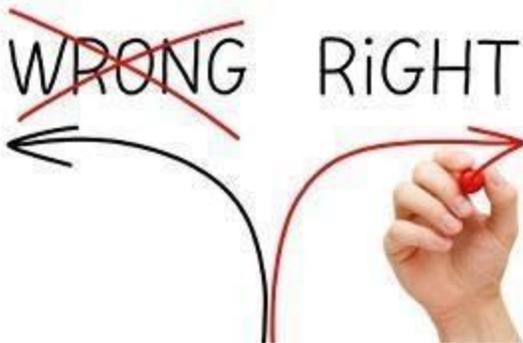
the reason for being hired was that the adjuster is/or becomes rude and/OR when the worker needs something such as additional treatment

**RUDE PEOPLE
SUCK!**

(or God forbid, the worker questions the weekly wage rate). Many times, when a person calls me early in a claim and nothing is going wrong, I tell them they do not need to hire me (yet). However, it is not unusual that as the claim progresses, the insurance

adjuster gets more surly or unreasonable and the worker often comes back to me.

10. When the insurance company has made a monetary offer and the worker has no idea if it is good, bad or otherwise. Statistics at the North Carolina Industrial Commission show that only 5% of the injured workers in North Carolina hire attorneys. That obviously means that in



95% of the cases, insurance adjusters with even a few weeks of training can “put one over on” an injured worker. For some reason, many workers feel embarrassed or ashamed that they got hurt at work and will just accept what the adjuster has offered. Several times per year I am asked to review claims where an offer has been made. I cannot

think of but one or two situations (in 22 years as a plaintiff’s attorney), where I was not able to substantially improve the person’s situation both medically and financially and more than pay for my attorney’s fee. On those rare occasions when the offer is actually good, I do not represent the person and will give them a free second opinion, regardless of whether it takes an hour or a half day. It’s just part of my business.

How To Determine If You Need To Call A Lawyer

Immediately after being injured in an accident, you are thrown into a legal system you don't understand. The insurance company or the employer has a team of adjusters, investigators, and attorneys who are working against you, seeking to pay you as little as possible, trying to get you back to work as quickly as possible, whether you are able to work or not.

Many job injury victims are living with so many doubts and stress and fear of the unknown. They are a bundle of nerves. They are drained physically, mentally and financially. They don't know what to do and understandably choose to delay what they consider to be the hassles involved in retaining a workers' compensation attorney. Some may have had a bad experience with an attorney (in a divorce, for example), or they simply do not like or trust attorneys. These people often attempt to represent themselves.



Some job-injury victims want to avoid paying legal fees, and call an attorney only after they realize that they've gotten "in over their heads." Unfortunately, there are many mistakes (such as providing damaging statements to adjusters) that cannot be "undone" by even the most

experienced workers' compensation attorney. Plus, if you wait too long to get legal help, it gets harder to find evidence and witnesses. You also risk losing your claim. There is a deadline for filing a Form 18. [Call me](#) and I can help.

The bottom line is...considering the legalities and complexities of the established system for compensating job injury victims, hiring an attorney is usually necessary to “level the playing field,” and to ensure that you receive maximum benefits for your work injury. Don’t let the system get over on you.

If you have been injured in a North Carolina workplace accident, or are suffering a work-related illness, contact an experienced board certified [North Carolina workers’ compensation attorney](#) as soon as possible to ensure that your rights are protected during your entire claim.



How To Tell A Good Lawyer From A Bad Lawyer

What to consider when hiring an attorney. What do you need to look for? How do you know if they are any good? What to avoid? What are some red flags?



1. Hire an attorney through a recommendation from a trusted friend. Simply stated, would you pick out your heart surgeon because he appeared on a late-night TV ad? (Maybe you would but you should always ask your own doctor or friends with similar illnesses/injuries whom they have used and whom they would recommend and why they would recommend them).

Martindale-Hubbell®



2.

Research the attorney's background and



BBB Rating: A+
as of 3/19/2020
[Click for Profile](#)

reputation. There

are numerous legal rating services with the most trustworthy being

Martindale-Hubbell, a long-established rating service where lawyers are rated by their peers and judges for both professional competence and ethics. Look for an attorney with an AV Rating. ("A" means preeminent in the area of practice and "V" means possessing the highest ethical standards). It is not unusual for a younger practitioner to have a BV Rating, but as the attorney progresses in practice skills, the best and most ethical attorneys will have an AV Rating.



BOARD CERTIFIED SPECIALIST

NORTH CAROLINA STATE BAR

Workers' Compensation Law

3. The attorney should be board certified in his or her particular area of specialty. The State Bar of North Carolina has established both reference and testing requirements for an attorney to become certified by the State Bar as a "board certified specialist" in workers' compensation law. The board certification test is like taking another bar exam, but in a specialty area. For example, I would not go to a doctor that is not board certified in the field of my injury. A workers' compensation client should only go to a board certified specialist in [North Carolina workers' compensation law](#).

4. The attorney should give back the community. Hopefully, most lawyers are in the profession because they want to help others. In my opinion, a very good indicator of whether a lawyer will care about you and your case is whether that lawyer is on boards and committees regarding the local bar, the State Bar, and organizations within his area of specialty. For example, has the lawyer served as an officer of any legal organization, whether locally or at the state – level? Does that lawyer belong to any workers' rights organizations such as the North Carolina Advocates for Justice or WILG - the Workplace Injury Litigation Group, which is a national workers' compensation attorney organization. Similarly, has that lawyer served on boards or committees in his church, community service organizations or other local organizations so you can tell the lawyer actually cares about others?



5. You should be able to actually reach the lawyer when you call his office. All attorneys are going to have a support staff which will typically answer the phone and screen calls in order of importance. IF you need to talk with a lawyer, can you? If not, that is a huge red flag.



6. Your lawyer should give you his cell phone for after hours, nights and weekends. Lawyering is a “service business” and people need to talk to lawyers when they need to talk to lawyers and not 24 to 48 hours later. (Of course, it is your responsibility to respect the lawyer’s personal time and

not call during times of family illness, late at night etc., unless it is a true emergency).



7. Your lawyer should return your phone calls. We're all busy and it is often difficult to return every phone call on the same day. Still, the lawyer should make every effort to return the phone call that day and if they aren't able, within 24 hours. These days, often a text

or email will suffice. Even if the lawyer cannot answer everything you need at that time, the lawyer should acknowledge that you have contacted him.

8. Your lawyer should be accessible. Again, lawyering is a service



business and if you don't understand something or need further information, your lawyer should make time to meet with you and explain things

to you. In complicated occupational disease cases, for example, it is not unusual to have eight or 10 meetings with a client and his or her loved ones to make sure the client understands everything.

9. Now, for the red flags. Some or all of these potential items of concern should be red flags for both hiring and retaining a lawyer:



- a. The lawyer talks down to you or doesn't explain things very well.



- b. The lawyer always appears too busy to speak with you.
- c. The lawyer always pawns off your phone calls to a paralegal or someone else.
- d. The lawyer refuses to meet with you when you want to drop something by the office or go over things.
- e. The lawyer only talks with you when it is time to "settle your case" as opposed to keeping you informed of the developments throughout the entirety of the case.

f. Your lawyer is “pushing you to settle.” (Now there are times when settlement is appropriate, but you need to have a common sense gut-level understanding of whether the lawyer is looking out for your best interests).

g. Your lawyer does not appear to be very experienced in the subject matter of your case.



h. Your lawyer always leaves the office at 5 PM.



i. Your lawyer is never available on the weekends.

j. It appears that your lawyer has not been recognized by any peer – organization for legal excellence.

k. Your lawyer does not belong to any workers’ rights organizations and, from what you can tell, does not appear to take an interest in further legal education.

l. It seems as if your lawyer needs the settlement money more than you do.



m. Lastly, you just have a gut feeling something is not right regarding this particular lawyer. Remember, it is YOUR CASE and not the lawyer's case.



What To Expect Once You Have Hired Me

1. You will receive a carbon copy of the letter of representation, any forms completed and sent to the North Carolina Industrial Commission and any letters sent to the employer/insurance carrier/opposing attorney.



2. You will receive periodic phone calls from us regarding your medical condition and medical treatment. We will need to hear from you when you change medical providers, when you have a significant medical visit or when you are facing roadblocks getting the medical care that you need.



3. You will receive information about the nurse case manager that the defense sometimes assigns to your case. (A nurse case manager is a rehabilitation professional who is paid by the carrier but whose responsibility is to ensure that you get the best care that you need. The nurse will assist you with scheduling medical visits

and obtaining prescription drugs). We will meet with you and the nurse case manager to go over the ground rules. It has been my experience that nurse case managers are generally pretty good at helping claimants, but we want to make sure that they are following the North Carolina Industrial Commission Rules (such as giving you

a private examination with the doctor and not having direct contact with the doctor behind your back).

4. You will receive a written copy of the defendant's "discovery," typically known as "Interrogatories and Request for Production of Documents." These are questionnaires that we must complete on your behalf to explain to the defendant the nature of your injuries, the difficulties you are having



as a result of your injuries, the medical care providers that have been treating you for those injuries and other pertinent matters including past jobs, other injuries, etc. The defense has a right to obtain certain information from you and we will work with you to provide that information through the forms that we will fill out.



5. You can call us to find out "how things are going" and whether or not certain events have transpired. For example, we could be trying to get you in to see a different doctor, undergo a second opinion, increase your wage payouts, get you durable medical equipment, arrange for prescription drugs, etc. We need to have an ongoing give-and-take relationship with you so that we can help you get the care and financial assistance that you need. We do want to hear from you when something significant occurs.

6. We will schedule meetings with you as your case progresses. The more complicated the case, the more meetings that are necessary. We



will meet with you, your spouse, your children, and your loved ones who will help you make decisions about your medical and financial needs. That being said, we are not financial professionals and we do not give advice regarding the management of money. However, part of our job is to help you maximize your financial recovery. As I have always said, when we are kids, we can give out hugs and teddy bears but when we become adults, the medium of exchange is money.

7. Sometimes we will file for hearing in your case and sometimes we will not. If things are going well and there is nothing yet in issue, we do not necessarily need to file for hearing. However, if “things break down” and you are not getting the care that you need, the claim has been denied, the wage payments are incorrect, or you need additional medical care, we will file for a hearing.



8. If we do file for hearing in your case then the claim must first be mediated. If we do not file for hearing in your case and you are at the end of your healing period, then we will often schedule your case for a mediation. Mediation is where the parties come together in the

presence of a neutral third-party attorney who “doesn’t have a dog in the fight” to try and bring the parties together. Remember it is YOUR case and not the lawyer’s so settlement will only occur if that is what you want. (Of course, the lawyer is there to explain for you the law and make recommendations).



9. If the case is settled at mediation, then the attorney will help draft the settlement documents and meet with you to go over the terms of the agreement. Then, the attorney will send the signed agreement to the defense attorney and the agreement will be reviewed and approved at the North Carolina Industrial Commission. When that agreement has been approved and an order has been issued by the NCIC, then the attorney will receive the proceeds and disperse them directly to you.
10. If the case does not settle at mediation and a hearing is necessary, the attorney will meet with you as many times as required to locate witnesses, documents and prepare for the case.
11. Remember that it is YOUR CASE so if you don’t feel like you understand something or if, when you get home, your spouse doesn’t understand something, call the attorney and schedule an appointment for a meeting in person.



Questions And Answers With Reid

Question: "What sets you, Reid, apart from other lawyers?"

Answer: What sets me apart is personal service. When you call, you first get a receptionist or paralegal but can almost always be put through directly to me. If I am out of the office, my staff will get up with me immediately as I "live and die" by the use of the phone. I give out my cell phone and routinely talk to folks at night and on weekends.

Question: "How long have you been a lawyer?"

Answer: I've been practicing law for 31 years, 26 in the area of workers' compensation law.

Question: "Does a lawyer need to be Board Certified?"

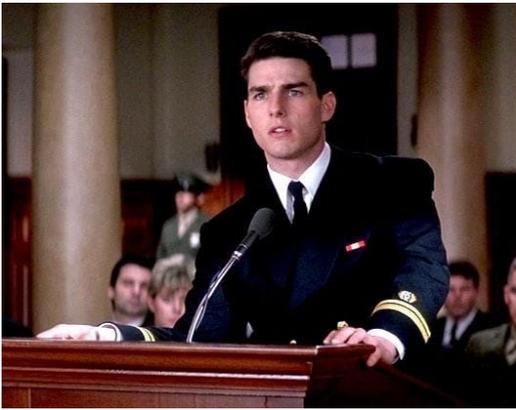
Answer: Absolutely. I am Board Certified by the State Bar of North Carolina. There are only about 65 attorneys in the state of North Carolina that are Board Certified plaintiff's attorneys in workers' compensation law.

Question: "Is workers' compensation law different from other 'types' of law?"

Answer: Yes. Workers' compensation law is highly specialized in that the average lawyer cannot simply "try to do one." It is a very unusual area of the law which is full of specific rules, limitations and cases which only an experienced workers' compensation attorney will know about. These cases are complex. Not simply valued based on the percentage of the rating to the injured body part. There is so much more involved regarding future medical care, a successful return to work, the potential for lifetime medical benefits and

ongoing disability. Also, the area of workers' compensation law must be coordinated with other wage loss benefits such as short-term disability, long-term disability, Social Security disability, Medicare and Medicaid, and other types of state-sponsored disability benefits.

Failure to properly address these areas can result in loss of income and medical care benefits. Or, it can result in having to pay back a medical care provider or insurer. A bad result can be devastating but avoidable if proper handling of the claim has occurred. Failure to address these areas can result in having to pay back thousands of dollars of medical and wage loss expenses.



These claims are extremely emotional in nature because in my opinion, there are two very important things in life - romance and finance. If your finances are messed up, meaning you can't work, then everything else is adversely affected.

Question: "What if a person is injured in a car accident while working?"

Answer: If the work-related injury was caused by a third-party (such as an automobile accident), it is crucial that those two claims be coordinated and handled in conjunction with one another. Failure to properly coordinate those benefits can result in loss of benefits of one of those claims and often will result in having to repay unnecessary medical bills and/or liens.

Question: "How and why is your law firm different?"

Answer: My firm is the opposite of the "mill-type" law firms. By "mill-type," I mean that the firms get in as many clients as possible, work the claims up--sometimes with or without an attorney's

involvement, and settle the claims as quickly as possible to keep the whole system running. Mill-type attorneys rarely take cases to trial even if benefits offered at mediation or during settlement are inadequate.

As an example, in a mill-type law firm, there are persons assigned to do "cookie-cutter" portions of the claim. Intake persons are typically young and attractive and only do intake. Certain paralegals are typically assigned to only order medical records, while completely different paralegals are assigned to receive those records and review them.



It is, unfortunately, very common in these types of firms that the attorney has little involvement in the claim until it is time for mediation. It is rare that the attorney actually meets with the client, in a mill-type firm, to discuss the claim.

What sets me apart is that I personally conduct individual intake meetings. I meet with the person for as long as necessary to fully understand the claim. It is time consuming but necessary. Then, I meet with the person periodically as the case progresses. I want to make the client

the best informed "consumer" that they can become for their legal matter.

In my experience, from mediating (working with both the employer/insurance and the injured employee to reach a settlement that is agreeable to both parties) for these mill-type lawyers, the attorney is often meeting their client for the first time on the day of the mediation. Obviously, there is no trust established when the claimant is meeting the attorney for the very first time on the morning of the mediation.

When I arrive to mediate a case, I am typically delayed for an hour while



the claimant and the attorney are getting to know each other.

Then I go into the room and face a very nervous, scared looking claimant who is sitting with arms crossed and is often frowning.

When the opening session is completed, I then go to the breakout room where that claimant and their attorney are meeting. I am faced with a very closed and often-hostile claimant who does not believe anything that the attorney has said (or at least is looking at what the attorney has said with disdain).

I then spend time explaining workers' compensation law to the claimant because the claimant was not educated about workers' comp by their attorney.

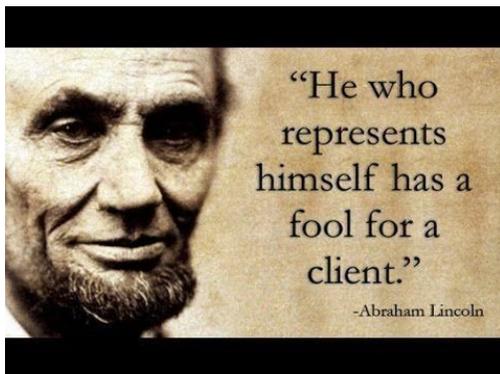
These mediations tend to take hours longer than normal because of the lack of trust between the client and the attorney. Most of what I do as a mediator in these instances is to try and build in some semblance of trust that has never been established between the claimant and their own attorney.

The settlement of these cases often involves the claimant resigning and losing their job. The claimant is often left fearing what the future holds without that job and steady paycheck.

Question: You mentioned doing the intake yourself and meeting periodically. "What does that mean to you?"

Answer: It means I will meet with everyone as many times as it takes for them to understand the case.

Question: "Do people often represent themselves?"



Answer: Sometimes, yes, they do. In fact, I had a situation once that will give you a good example. Let me give you an example.

One of my colleagues called me to ask if I would represent his neighbor, whom I shall call John. John was a truck driver for a grocery store chain. He had been injured very severely when he fell from a loading dock.

I met with John and his wife and he was hesitant to hire me because he thought he could take care of his case on his own. He continued to email me for approximately the next year to ask me questions about his case.

Since I was not technically representing him, I provided him with general legal advice but always stressed the fact by first saying, "John, while I am not representing you as your lawyer, in general the law is...."

John eventually decided to hire me. We met for approximately two hours and discussed his case. We signed all the necessary paperwork and I began representing him. John came back to my office on eight other

occasions to discuss this case. These meetings were often repetitive as I discussed the same information which was previously given.

At the end of those nine meetings, John sent a text to me one night and said "Reid - I really like you but you have given me so much information, I think I can do this on my own, I do not think I need you as my attorney."

I was surprised at John's decision, but I honored it. I then sent John a bill for the approximate 10 hours that I had spent on his case in the event he later settled the case on his own for a monetary recovery. (My fee contract allows for that).

I told John early on that his case was worth about \$200,000 and I was ultimately correct on that assessment. John tried to negotiate the claim on his own and when it got too complicated, he came back to rehire me prior to reaching the final number.

John then asked me to represent him on his Social Security disability claim and I was able to win that claim as well.

Question: "Do you take every case that comes to you?"

Answer: No, I don't. I am not always able to help someone and that is usually due to the fact that they don't need surgery and have not missed time from work due to the injury. I take cases, large and small. I take a lot of cases that other attorneys wouldn't take (meaning some low-paying ones) because it's just the right thing to do. Someone needs to take responsibility and look out for the little guys. It might as well be me. I sleep good at night knowing I can make a difference in someone's life.

About M. Reid

Combining experience and knowledge with individual attention and prompt service.

Mr. Acree is a board-certified specialist in workers' compensation law. Over 90% of his practice involves handling work-related injuries and occupational diseases such as asbestosis, lung cancer and mesothelioma. He has been practicing law for over 29 years. He is dedicated to representing injured and sick workers that have not necessarily been treated fairly by their employers and the insurance carriers. His experience lends itself to providing compassionate, effective representation.

PRACTICE AREAS



Question: "What areas of law do you practice?"

Answer: I mainly limit my practice to workers' compensation and Social Security disability. The practice of Social Security disability dovetails nicely with the workers' compensation practice since I am trying to prove disability under both state based and federally based systems. I'll occasionally handle an automobile injury claim since the issues involve medical care, proof of causation and disability.

Question: "Is there ongoing education you are required to do annually?"

Answer: Yes, I routinely take 45 hours of legal education per year in workers' compensation, injury and disability law. The required amount of North Carolina State Bar Continuing Legal Education is about 14 hours per year. I am occasionally asked to teach seminars and write papers on workers' compensation law. I previously served as an elected member of the North Carolina Bar Association's Workers' Compensation Council.

Information to Give the Lawyer About Your Work-Related Injury or Disease

Occupational Disease - Click [here](#) to fill out the form.

1. What were you exposed to?
2. When did your exposures occur? (Usually, it's a time frame, say, over several months or years).
3. Where did your exposures occur? (Physical location including state).
4. Who were you working for when these exposures occurred? (If not sure, what was the company name on your paycheck?).
5. Did the exposures occur at your employer's plant or while working at someone else's plant?
6. Did these exposures cause you any physical problems?
7. If so, what problems?
8. Were you diagnosed with a disease?

9. Did you tell the doctor that your medical condition is related to work – exposure?
10. Did that doctor ever tell you that your medical condition is related to work – exposure?
11. If so, how long ago was that? (Reason: there is a two-year statute of limitation from the date that a doctor tells you that you have a disease that came from your work).
12. Is your disease keeping you from working?
13. If you are working, is your disease keeping you from working as much?
14. Have you suffered any wage loss as a result of your disease?
15. Have you filed a claim for workers' compensation benefits? (if so, when? Where? - meaning what state).
16. Was that claim denied by the insurance carrier?
17. Did you give an insurance adjuster a recorded statement?
18. Has any adjuster recommended settlement?

19. What state is your company out of? (if NC, then the claim can be filed here).

20. What state were you hired in? (Were you physically sitting in North Carolina when you were hired? - like a job call-in line from your kitchen table - if so, then the claim can be brought here).

21. In what state did your last exposure occur? (if NC, the claim can likely be brought here).

22. Why did you call a lawyer?



Work-Related Injury - Click [here](#) to fill out the form.

1. When were you injured? (date and time).
2. Where were you injured? (city and state).
3. How were you injured? (what happened).
4. What did you hurt? (body parts).
5. Who is your employer? (If not sure, what is the company name on your paycheck?).
6. What state does your employer operate out of? (if out of state, are you from another state and just working in North Carolina?).
7. Did someone other than your employer cause the injury? (In other words - a third-party motor vehicle, a third-party on the property or someone not connected with the employer? - If so, then there may be a third-party claim against the bad actor).
8. Did you seek medical treatment for your injuries? Describe treatment - (explain briefly and go in order. For example - urgent care, emergency room, orthopedist).
9. Did you have surgery? (If so, describe).

10. If you did not have surgery, will you need surgery? (If so, when?).
11. Did any doctor write you out of work?
12. If out of work, how long have you been out?
13. Are you getting paid any \$ while out of work?
14. Who is paying you? (Your employer or the workers' comp carrier?).
15. Has your case been accepted as "compensable" (or payable) by the workers' compensation carrier? (If you don't know, who is paying your medical and wage loss benefits?).
16. How much were you earning at the time of the injury? (Per week or year, gross meaning before taxes).
17. How much is your weekly check while you are out of work?
18. If not working, do you know when you will be returning to work?
19. If you are working, is it at full duty? Light duty?
20. Are you losing income as a result of your injury? (If so, how much?).

21. If you are working, is it still with the same employer when you were injured?

22. Have you given a recorded statement to an adjuster?

23. Has any adjuster talked to you about settlement?

24. Why did you call a lawyer?



Documents To Have When You Call Or Visit The Lawyer



General Rule: if you can spend 10 minutes accumulating and sorting your paper file, it would greatly help the lawyer understand your case. Put “like things in like piles” - meaning, separate the documents from your employer, the insurance carrier, the North Carolina Industrial Commission and

the medical facilities and put them in order. Click [here](#) for checklist.

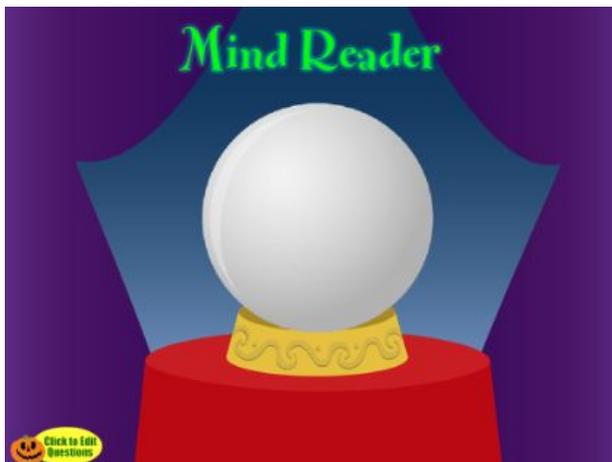
1. The lawyer needs to know who you were working for when you got hurt. (Do you have a paycheck, a letter from the employer or some document that says who the employer was? Sometimes folks don’t know if they have been working on a construction site with multiple subcontractors).
2. The lawyer needs to know if you completed any accident reports at work. Did any other person complete accident reports on your behalf? (like your safety manager?). If so, do you have those documents?

3. The lawyer needs to know if a claim has been filed at the North Carolina Industrial Commission. Do you have an Industrial Commission Form 18 that you have filed?
4. The lawyer needs to know if your claim has been accepted or denied by the insurance carrier. (Do you have an Industrial Commission Form 60 (acceptance); Form 63 (partial acceptance) or Form 61 (denial)?
5. The lawyer needs to know if you or someone on your behalf has filed for a hearing (do you have an Industrial Commission Form 33?).
6. The lawyer needs to understand your medical condition. Usually an injured worker is sent to an urgent care facility or to the emergency room. Then the worker is often referred to a physical therapist, to an orthopedist or other specialist. Put any records regarding those doctors in separate piles, in chronological order. You need to know where you were examined, for what condition, what is your diagnosis and what is your treatment plan. Particularly important is whether or not you will need surgery.
7. The lawyer needs to know how much money you were earning at the time of your injury. Why is this? Workers' compensation premiums are based on employer payroll. Therefore, workers' compensation benefits for lost wages are a percentage of the workers' average weekly wage. Do you have any pre-injury paychecks?
8. If your claim has been accepted as compensable and you are receiving ongoing weekly disability checks known as "temporary total disability,"

do you have copies of those checks? The lawyer needs to make sure that you are correctly receiving the proper TTD benefit.

9. The lawyer needs to know if you have received any letters from the insurance company. Particularly important would be any acceptance or denial letters and any offers for settlement.

10. The lawyer needs to know if you are currently represented by another attorney. If so, whom, and why are you talking to another lawyer?



11. The lawyer needs to know why you have contacted him or her. What are you seeking to accomplish? Better medical care? Tired of dealing with an insurance adjuster? Wanting someone to protect your interests?



How Long Does It Take To Resolve A Workers' Comp Claim?

1. I hate to say this, but the answer is: "it depends." Let me start by saying this: the doctors have a phrase known as the Hippocratic Oath which says that a doctor should: "do no harm." As I understand it, doctors recite that oath when they become doctors. LAWYERS should abide by that same oath. By that I mean that a lawyer should NEVER settle the case unless it is time to settle the case. How does one know when it's time to settle the case? EXPERIENCE. Let me explain further in the paragraphs below.

2. If the claim involves the surgery or a significant healing period, then obviously the claim cannot be settled (or should not be settled) until the worker has reached the healing plateau known as "maximum medical improvement" ("MMI"). Maximum medical improvement does not mean that you, as the worker, are necessarily as good as you were before the injury occurred but that you have reached the end of your healing period and that you are stable. Your treating doctor will tell you when you are at MMI.

3. Sometimes a claim can be settled before the end of the healing period but under certain specific circumstances. For example, if the claim is denied and medical care is needed but the carrier is not providing that care, then, sometimes the worker needs to obtain a settlement in order to be able to pay for that medical care under another source such as Obamacare, health insurance or self-pay.

4. You as the client always have the say as to when to settle your case. So, in certain circumstances IF you want to settle your case before the end of your medical care, that is your prerogative but you are going to hear from the lawyer as to why that may not be wise. On the other hand, if you are facing years and years of protracted difficult litigation and the outcome is still uncertain (meaning, "you may lose your case"), then sometimes you may choose to resolve your case earlier rather than later.

5. The key to resolving a workers' compensation claim is having properly been advised by the lawyer throughout the ENTIRETY of your claim, understanding the pros and cons of settling your claim versus going to a hearing, and if you are settling the claim, then how much is the value. All of this is what I like to call "cost-benefit legal analysis" which simply means explaining to you as the injured worker, what is your probability of winning, how long is it going to take and how much will you recover whether you went to trial or settle at a mediation.

6. I like to believe that people generally make good decisions before they ever come to see me. You have raised families, bought houses, cars, educated your children and instilled in them good values. So, it is not up to me to tell you how to live your life. It is up to me to ask questions about your life so that I can better understand your need for medical care and financial compensation. What is correct for one person is not necessarily correct for another. (For example, I once settled a man's case during mediation for \$22,000. The claim was clearly worth \$30,000 and I asked him why he chose to settle. He said, "I forgot to tell you this, I borrowed \$15,000 from my neighbor to start a business and the loan is due." Well, there you have it! What was correct for him may not be correct for someone else).

7. The resolution of a workers' compensation claim takes as long as it takes. I get that you don't necessarily like dealing with lawyers. I don't like

dealing with lawyers and, as an example, once felt the same as you when dealing with a family financial matter concerning an uncle who had passed away in Virginia. There were certain estate issues and relatives on my side of the family were good at “bugging me to death” because they knew I was a lawyer and thought I could have some influence over the proceeding. I could not and I waited, just as you may be waiting, for what seemed like a slow outcome.

8. Each of us comes to the table with a certain risk tolerance. Some people have said to me that they’ve never had any windfall of money, they don’t necessarily need it and they want to go to trial to get as much as possible. Other folks have said that they truly did not have the stomach for 2 to 3 years of litigation and wanted to put this matter to rest. So, each case is different, and I can tell you that I will do what is best for you in your individual case.

That may not have answered the question as concisely as you wanted to hear but it’s the truth.



Who Is Reid Acree?

The real Reid - by Scott Steele

When it comes to lawyers, everyone wants to tell you all about their legal accomplishments. That's important, but, you really don't know what the attorney is like as a person. So what is Reid really like?



Reid is one of the most honest, morally ethical people I know. He dresses like a goofball at times, well most of the time actually (honestly, who wore ties THAT BIG, even when they were fashionable?). He truly cares about people, all people, regardless of someone's social status. He is dependable, takes time out of his busy schedule just to talk to a friend that needs someone to listen. Reid really listens when someone is talking with him, that is rare these days.



A sports fan, he played football at Wake Forest (#73 getting worked over pregame), a total animal lover, he and his lovely wife Tina have rescued numerous animals over the years. He's just a downright good guy. Someone that can be trusted. He never looks at situations with the what's in it for me attitude that too

many people have nowadays. I am proud to call Reid a friend, the kind of friend that is hard to come by. The world would be a helluva lot better place if there were more people like Reid in the world. When I think about my perception of what a lawyer is like, Reid doesn't fit that mold. That's a really good thing too. I have met a few that I am sure they bought their degree and had someone else take their bar exam.

With that being said, here's the other stuff.



"Do you promise to pay the bill,
the whole bill and nothing but the bill?"

About Reid Acree

Reid is a board-certified specialist in workers' compensation law. Over 90% of his practice involves handling work-related injuries and occupational diseases such as asbestosis, lung cancer and mesothelioma. He has been practicing law for over 31 years. He is dedicated to representing injured and sick workers' that have not necessarily been treated fairly by their employers and the insurance carriers. His experience lends itself to providing compassionate, effective representation.

Background

Heightened Sense of Right and Wrong

I recently asked Reid why he took it upon himself to be the arbiter of right and wrong. Here is his response:

"I don't know, that's just the way I am, I've always been that way. I guess it's the way I was raised. I always try to do 'the next right thing', and I have my parents to thank for instilling the empathy and awareness of what someone else is going through."



“As an example, I was recently going through some of my parents’ memorabilia (they both passed away from cancer in 2008). I ran across a letter that Charles “Lefty” Driesell, the former men’s basketball coach from the University of Maryland, had sent to my mother. I’m sure that most everyone knows about the death of his beloved player, Len Bias. (A once in a generation



player, like David Thompson or Michael Jordan, that was the number one draft pick of the Boston Celtics). Unbeknownst to me, my mother wrote Lefty a personal letter of condolence when Len Bias died. Coach Driesell sent my mother the following letter which, to me, is priceless. (I'm going to have it framed)."

Reid was born near Raleigh, North Carolina but grew up in the Roanoke Valley of Virginia, the only child of Milton and Shirley Acree. He attended Wake Forest University and graduated *cum laude* in 1982 with a degree in economics.

After graduation, he was accepted into law school but chose to work for four years before going to Wake Forest School of Law. He graduated from Wake Forest School of Law in 1989. While there, he was an elected member of the Law Review, Moot Court Board and the Honor Council.

After graduating from law school, Reid worked in Atlanta and Raleigh, primarily in the areas of products liability defense, workers' compensation defense and management employment law.



About 10 years into his defense practice, Reid had a "moment of clarity" and, while working on a case in which the worker would likely lose his leg, Reid had a chance encounter with the worker and his son that changed

Reid's life and opened his eyes to the impact work-related injuries have on the families of the injured.

While on the way to the mediation area, Reid said hello to the claimant's five-year old son. The little boy would not speak to him. The claimant bent down and told his son: "When someone is speaking to you, you need to look them in the eye and say hello." Reid realized that was the same man that he would later defeat in mediation. He decided from that point forward, he could no longer in good conscience represent large insurance carriers and employers. Reid was determined to make a difference. He soon changed to a plaintiff's (injured workers') practice where he has been professionally and spiritually fulfilled ever since.



Focus on Occupational Diseases

For 22 years, Reid has focused his plaintiff's practice on occupational diseases such as asbestosis, cancers and mesothelioma. He routinely receives occupational disease referrals from other North Carolina and national attorneys. He works with firms in Texas, Illinois, Missouri and Ohio regarding the handling of their North Carolina asbestos disease claims. He has handled over 3,500 North Carolina asbestos disease cases. Some of his more meaningful results have been:

- Winning the first colon cancer claim in North Carolina due to asbestos exposure. (*Jesse Bill Childress v. Fluor Daniel*).
- Obtaining \$241,000 for a widow in attendant care benefits as compensation for the care she provided to her husband, sick with asbestos-related lung cancer. (*James Leroy Wallace v. Becon*).
- Obtaining an asbestos-lung cancer settlement of \$500,000 after successfully winning the case at trial. (*Spry v. Norandal*).

- Negotiating and settling dozens of asbestos-disease cases in excess of \$200,000 (not easy to do since there is no “pain and suffering” paid in workers’ compensation cases).
- Negotiating and settling a client’s occupational asthma claim caused by 37 years of exposure to chicken feces.

Work on Injury Claims

Over the past 15 years, more of Reid’s practice has involved work-related injuries. Now, about 50% of his caseload involves injury-related claims. Such examples include injuries to the spine, arms, fingers, shoulders, hips, legs, knees and feet. Some examples of his successes include:

- Successfully tried and won a claim on behalf of a manufacturing worker who became partially paralyzed. The employer attempted to have the claim denied and the case thrown out of court on the grounds that the claim was fraudulent. The claim, which was litigated for three years, was subsequently settled for a value to the client in excess of \$1.3 million.
- Increasing the value of a non-surgical neck injury claim from a \$900 offer to \$85,000. Reid is especially proud of that case since the claimant’s weekly “workers’ compensation pay rate” was only \$90. (Interestingly, the worker had complained that her employer would not let her take a bathroom break. Reid read in the paper that that same employer had successfully been sued in another state for refusing to allow employees to go to the restroom. Reid presented the workers’ compensation adjuster with a copy of that newspaper article and thus, increased the overall value of the workers’ compensation claim to \$85,000). That recovery allowed the claimant to move out of her car and into an apartment. About eight years later, Reid successfully represented that same claimant in her Social Security disability claim.

- Increasing the value of a single-surgery knee injury claim from the offer of \$31,000 to \$135,000.
- Increasing the value of a “ratings only” cervical spine case from \$35,000 to \$105,000, when it became apparent that the employer, a hospital, wanted to fire the claimant (a nurse).
- Successfully blocking a “settlement offer” of \$31,000 that had been sent to the Industrial Commission for approval, and later negotiating the claim to a value of \$75,000.
- Successfully negotiating an annuity in a lifetime benefits claim which would pay the worker significantly greater weekly wages than he had been receiving under workers’ compensation.

Settlement vs. Trial

As Reid has become more experienced, more and more cases tend to settle in mediation. However, if it is not in the best interest of the claimant to settle the case, Reid has no problem going to court. He has approximately 110 reported decisions at the North Carolina Industrial Commission and North Carolina Court of Appeals.

Social Security Disability Claims

When Reid started his own firm in 2003, he began handling Social Security disability claims. He had been representing injured workers in the workers’ compensation arena and as a logical progression of his practice, albeit in a different venue. He found that his experience in handling workers’ compensation claims allowed him to successfully handle Social Security disability claims. When Reid began attending legal education seminars on Social Security disability, he was amused when many of the attorneys appeared hung up on “this rule or that rule” for proving disability. Reid mentioned that his success rate was good because, as a workers’ compensation attorney, he understood what it means to be

disabled and how to prove that. Reid has handled approximately 400 Social Security disability claims.

Mediation

Reid is certified by the North Carolina State Bar's Dispute Resolution Commission as a Superior Court mediator. He is frequently called on to help the parties resolve complex claims including those for occupational disease. His personal experience as both a defense attorney and a plaintiff's attorney is invaluable in communicating with "both sides."

Professional Organizations and Licensure

- State Bar of North Carolina
- North Carolina Bar Association ("NCBA")
- State Bar of South Carolina
- State Bar of Georgia (inactive)
- Supreme Court of the United States
- Past President of Judicial Bar 19-C (Rowan County, NC)
- Board Certified as a workers' compensation law specialist by the North Carolina State Bar (less than 3.7% of the attorneys in North Carolina are board certified)
- Certified as a superior court mediator by the North Carolina Dispute Resolution Commission
- North Carolina Advocates for Justice, sustaining member ("NCAJ" is the plaintiff's advocacy group in North Carolina)
- Workers' Injury Law & Advocacy Group ("WILG") (national organization for attorneys representing injured workers)

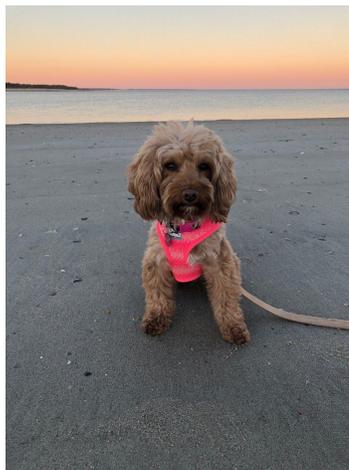
- National Organization of Social Security Claimants' Representatives ("NOSSCR")
- Workers' Compensation Section Council of NCBA (former member)
- Education Law Section Council of NCBA (former member)
- External field counsel for the North Carolina Association of Educators ("NCAE")
- State Bar of North Carolina Lawyer Assistance Program, board member (also a LAP volunteer)
- Lawyer Assistance Program Foundation, President
- Frequent speaker at continuing legal education seminars on issues related to workers' compensation and the Lawyer Assistance Program

Community Service

- Elizabeth Hanford Dole Chapter of the American Red Cross, former board member and board chair
- Faithful Friends Animal Sanctuary, Salisbury, North Carolina, former board member
- Shelter Guardians of Salisbury, North Carolina, advisory counsel
- Rowan Salisbury Community Action Agency/Head Start, former advising attorney
- North Hills Christian School, former board member
- Salisbury Academy, current trustee
- First National Bank, advisory board

Interests

- Wake Forest Demon Deacon sports. Go Deacs!
- Bicycling
- Reading (all the time)
- Traveling
- Helping animals (*Reid's beloved pets below*)



Personal Mottos and Sayings

- My job is to educate you and make you the most educated consumer possible about your case.
- It's not my case, it's "YOUR CASE!"
- I will explain things to you as if I am standing at the pearly gates and am answering questions to get into heaven. I will tell you the truth.
- I want to pass "the grocery store test." What is the grocery store test? After my representation of you has ended and you see me at the grocery store, do you come toward me or do you walk away from me? I want you to come toward me.



Workers' Compensation Forms

You can find the information about the workers' compensation carrier for your employer from the Industrial Commission in one of the following three ways:

Searching the Insurance Coverage Search System.

You have filed a [Form 18](#) asserting a claim against the employer.

The employer or carrier has filed a [Form 19](#) reporting your injury.

The Industrial Commission sends out an acknowledgement letter when a [Form 18](#) is processed that contains information about the insurance carrier. However, if you have not yet received an acknowledgement letter and you need this information, you may contact the Industrial Commission. It is not required that you provide insurance carrier information when completing a [Form 18](#) if you do not have that information.

Employee Forms

Any claim by an employee must begin by filling out the correct form. It is highly recommended you have your lawyer file the form on your behalf.

[Form 18](#)

This is where you begin when you have a claim. This form **MUST** be filled out completely and submitted to the Industrial Commission when you have been injured on the job.

[Form 18B](#)

This form is used if there is a claim by an Employee, Representative, or Dependent for Lung Disease, Including Asbestosis, Silicosis, and Byssinosis (G.S. §97-53)

[Form 18M](#)

This form should be used if an employee wishes to apply for Additional Medical Compensation (G.S. §97-25.1) (Applicable to Injuries by Accident or Occupational Illness on or After July 5, 1994)

Additional Forms

[Please click here to visit the Forms page for a complete listing of all the available NC Industrial Commission Forms](#)



REPRESENTING INJURED WORKERS

—IT'S WHAT I DO.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION CLAIMS

- > Injuries, Diseases
- > Asbestosis and Cancer
- > Mesothelioma

SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY

CONTACT US FOR A FREE CONSULTATION



THANK YOU

We Welcome Your Feedback

If you have any legal questions regarding workers' compensation, illness or Social Security disability, please don't hesitate to get in touch with me.

Office: 704-633-0860

www.acreelaw.com

reidacree@acreelaw.com

Publishing or Direct Response Marketing Questions? <https://lionsedge.io/>

We hope you
have found the
information in
this book helpful.

Thank You