

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE DISTRICT OF NEW MEXICO**

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,

Plaintiff,

v.

Civil No. xx-xxxx LAM/xxx

,

Defendant.

***COURT'S INSTRUCTIONS TO THE JURY***

INSTRUCTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

OPENING - PROVINCE OF THE COURT

MEMBERS OF THE JURY:

You have now heard all of the evidence in the case.

It becomes my duty, therefore, to instruct you on the rules of law that you must follow and apply in arriving at your decision in the case.

In any jury trial there are, in effect, two judges. I am one of the judges; the other is you, the jury. It is my duty to preside over the trial and to determine what evidence is relevant under the law for your consideration. It is also my duty at the end of the trial to instruct you on the law applicable to the case. You are the sole and exclusive judge of the facts. I must stress that you are required to accept the rules of law that I give you, whether or not you agree with them.

INSTRUCTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

JUDGES OF THE FACTS

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

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

By the same token it is also your duty to base your verdict solely upon the evidence in the case, without prejudice or sympathy.

INSTRUCTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

EQUAL STANDING

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

INSTRUCTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

PREPONDERANCE OF THE EVIDENCE

The plaintiff must prove every essential part of its claim(s) by a preponderance of the evidence.

The defendant must prove every essential part of its affirmative defense(s) by a preponderance of the evidence.

A preponderance of the evidence simply means evidence that persuades you that a party's claim is more likely true than not true.

In deciding whether any fact has been proven by a preponderance of the evidence, you may, unless otherwise instructed, consider the testimony of all witnesses, regardless of who may have called them, and all exhibits received in evidence regardless of who may have produced them. If the proof fails to establish any essential part of plaintiff's claim(s) by a preponderance of the evidence, you should find for the defendant.

If the proof fails to establish any essential part of defendant's affirmative defense(s) by a preponderance of the evidence, plaintiff is not precluded from recovery.

INSTRUCTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

**MULTIPLE PARTIES**

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

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

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

INSTRUCTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

CORPORATION AS A PARTY

A corporation may act only through natural persons as its agents or employees. In general, agents or employees of a corporation may bind the corporation by their acts and declarations made while acting within the scope of their authority delegated to them by the corporation, or within the scope of their duties as employees of the corporation.

INSTRUCTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

**CORPORATE IMPARTIALITY**

Some of the parties in this case are corporations. Do not let bias, prejudice or sympathy play any part in your deliberations. A corporation is entitled to the same fair and unprejudiced treatment as an individual, and you should decide the case with the same impartiality as you would use in deciding a case between individuals.

INSTRUCTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

DEFINITION OF EVIDENCE

Unless you are otherwise instructed, the evidence in the case consists of the sworn testimony of the witnesses regardless of who called the witness, all exhibits received in evidence regardless of who may have produced them, and all facts and events that may have been admitted or stipulated to [and all facts and events that may have been judicially noticed].

Statements and arguments by the lawyers are not evidence. The lawyers are not witnesses. What they have said in their opening statement, closing arguments, and at other times is intended to help you interpret the evidence, but it is not evidence. However, when the lawyers on both sides stipulate or agree on the existence of a fact, you must, unless otherwise instructed, accept the stipulation and regard that fact as proved.

[I may take judicial notice of certain facts or events. When I declare that I will take judicial notice of some fact or event, you must, unless otherwise instructed, accept my declaration as evidence and regard as proved the fact or event which has been judicially noticed.]

Any evidence to which I have sustained an objection and evidence that I have ordered stricken must be entirely disregarded.

You must consider only the evidence in this case. However, you may draw such reasonable inferences from the testimony and exhibits as you feel are justified in the light of common experience. You may make deductions and reach conclusions that reason and common sense lead you to make from the testimony and evidence.

INSTRUCTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

CIRCUMSTANTIAL v. DIRECT EVIDENCE

Generally speaking, there are two types of evidence that are generally presented during a trial—direct evidence and circumstantial evidence. “Direct evidence” is the testimony of a person who asserts or claims to have actual knowledge of a fact, such as an eyewitness. “Indirect or circumstantial” evidence is proof of a chain of facts and circumstances indicating the existence or nonexistence of a fact.

As a general rule, the law makes no distinction between the weight or value to be given to either direct or circumstantial evidence. Nor is a greater degree of certainty required of circumstantial evidence. You are simply required to find the facts in accordance with the preponderance of all the evidence in the case, both direct and circumstantial.

INSTRUCTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

CREDIBILITY OF WITNESSES

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

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

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

INSTRUCTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

IMPEACHMENT

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

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

[or by specific acts of wrongdoing of the witness]

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

INSTRUCTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

SCIENTIFIC/TECHNICAL EVIDENCE

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

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

INSTRUCTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

EXPERT OPINION

The rules of evidence ordinarily do not permit witnesses to testify as to opinions or conclusions. An exception to this rule exists for “expert witnesses.” An expert witness is a person who, by education and experience has become expert in some art, science, profession, or calling. Expert witnesses may state their opinions as to matters in which they profess to be expert, and may also state their reasons for their opinions.

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

INSTRUCTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

**DEMONSTRATIVE EXHIBITS**

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

INSTRUCTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

LIMITED PURPOSE

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

INSTRUCTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

DEPOSITION TESTIMONY

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

INSTRUCTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

**INTERROGATORIES**

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

INSTRUCTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

ATTORNEY INTERVIEW OF WITNESSES

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

INSTRUCTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

**PROXIMATE CAUSE, GENERAL**

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

INSTRUCTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

PROXIMATE CAUSE, GENERAL + INDEPENDENT INTERVENING CAUSE

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

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

INSTRUCTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

**DETERMINE LIABILITY BEFORE DAMAGES**

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

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

INSTRUCTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

**DAMAGES MUST BE REASONABLE**

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

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

INSTRUCTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

DOUBLE RECOVERY

If you find that the defendant is liable to the plaintiff, then you must determine an amount that is fair compensation for all of the plaintiff's damages. These damages are called compensatory damages. The purpose of compensatory damages is to make the plaintiff whole—that is, to compensate the plaintiff for the damage that the plaintiff has suffered. [Compensatory damages are not limited to expenses that the plaintiff may have incurred because of his injury. If the plaintiff wins, he/she is entitled to compensatory damages for the physical injury, pain and suffering, mental anguish, shock and discomfort that he/she has suffered because of the defendant's conduct.]

You may award compensatory damages only for injuries that the plaintiff proves were proximately caused by the defendant's allegedly wrongful conduct. The damages that you award must be fair compensation for all of the plaintiff's damages, no more and no less. [Damages are not allowed as a punishment and cannot be imposed or increased to penalize the defendant.] You should not award compensatory damages for speculative injuries, but only for those injuries which the plaintiff has actually suffered or that the plaintiff is reasonably likely to suffer in the future.

If you decide to award compensatory damages, you should be guided by dispassionate common sense. Computing damages may be difficult, but you must not let that difficulty lead you to engage in arbitrary guesswork. On the other hand, the law does not require that the plaintiff prove the amount of his losses with mathematical precision, but only with as much definiteness and accuracy as the circumstances permit.

You must use sound discretion in fixing an award of damages, drawing reasonable inferences where you find them appropriate from the facts and circumstances in evidence.

INSTRUCTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

FUTURE DAMAGES

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

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

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

INSTRUCTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

FUTURE INTEREST

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

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

INSTRUCTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

MITIGATION

A person who claims damages resulting from the wrongful act of another has a duty under the law to use reasonable diligence to mitigate—to avoid or minimize those damages.

If you find the defendant is liable and the plaintiff has suffered damages, the plaintiff may not recover for any item of damage which he could have avoided through reasonable effort. If you find by a preponderance of the evidence the plaintiff unreasonably failed to take advantage of an opportunity to lessen his damages, you should deny him recovery for those damages which he would have avoided had he taken advantage of the opportunity.

You are the sole judge of whether the plaintiff acted reasonably in avoiding or minimizing his damages. An injured plaintiff may not sit idly by when presented with an opportunity to reduce his damages. However, he is not required to exercise unreasonable efforts or incur unreasonable expenses in mitigating the damages. The defendant has the burden of proving the damages which the plaintiff could have mitigated. In deciding whether to reduce the plaintiff's damages because of his failure to mitigate, you must weigh all the evidence in light of the particular circumstances of the case, using sound discretion in deciding whether the defendant has satisfied his burden of proving that the plaintiff's conduct was not reasonable.

INSTRUCTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

LIFE EXPECTANCY

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

INSTRUCTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

### PUNITIVE DAMAGES

If you find that the defendant is liable for the plaintiff's injuries, you must award the plaintiff the compensatory damages that he/she has proven. You also may award punitive damages, if the plaintiff has proved that the defendant acted with malice or willfulness or with callous and reckless indifference to the safety or rights of others. One acts willfully or with reckless indifference to the rights of others when he acts in disregard of a high and excessive degree of danger about which he knows or which would be apparent to a reasonable person in his condition.

If you determine that the defendant's conduct was so shocking and offensive as to justify an award of punitive damages, you may exercise your discretion to award those damages. In making any award of punitive damages, you should consider that the purpose of punitive damages is to punish a defendant for shocking conduct, and to deter the defendant and others from engaging in similar conduct in the future. The law does not require you to award punitive damages, however, if you decide to award punitive damages, you must use sound reason in setting the amount of the damages. The amount of an award of punitive damages must not reflect bias, prejudice, or sympathy toward any party. It should be presumed a plaintiff has been made whole by compensatory damages, so punitive damages should be awarded only if the defendant's misconduct, after having paid compensatory damages, is so reprehensible as to warrant the imposition of further sanctions to achieve punishment or deterrence. You may consider the financial resources of the defendant in fixing the amount of punitive damages and you may impose punitive damages against one or more of the defendants, and not others, or against more than one defendant in different amounts.

INSTRUCTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

FAITHFUL PERFORMANCE

Faithful performance by you of your duties is vital to the administration of justice.

Any verdict must represent the considered judgment of each juror. In order to return a verdict, it is necessary that each juror agree to it. In other words, your verdict must be unanimous.

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

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

INSTRUCTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

FOREPERSON

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

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

(Read the verdict form)

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

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**UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE**