



# LAW OFFICE OF WILLIAM J. LUSE

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## “100 Deadliest Days”

The stretch of time between Memorial Day and Labor Day has been called the “100 Deadliest Days” by AAA, as the number of fatal car crashes involving teen drivers spikes during this time. Over 5,000 deaths have been reported over the summer for the past five years, a rate that is 16 percent higher than other times of the year.

Teens drive more over the summer than other times of the year since school is out. They frequently drive greater distances as well, traveling to summer jobs or heading to the beach or other vacation destinations. In addition, teen drivers are generally the least experienced drivers out there and are the age group that’s most likely to drive while distracted. All these circumstances make for a volatile combination.

The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety found that a whopping 60 percent of crashes involving teen drivers were due to distracted driving. The organization conducted a study from 2007-2015 in which teen drivers’ cars were equipped with a camera system that recorded video, audio, and acceleration forces. The data gathered following approximately 2,200 crashes indicated the top three forms of distracted teen driving:

- Talking to or paying attention to other passengers accounted for 15 percent of crashes. The more passengers, the higher the risk.
- Cell phone activities, including texting and talking, contributed 12 percent. Texting alone creates a crash risk 23 times greater than undistracted driving.
- Tending to something inside the vehicle, such as the radio or GPS, checked in at 11 percent.

Education and improved parent/child communication play major roles in reducing deadly teen crashes. Stricter laws on texting while driving may be beneficial as well. •

### July 2017 News



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# Overbooked Flights and Knowing Your Rights



Overbooking is standard practice across the airline industry. Airlines want planes as full as allowable upon takeoff. They also know there will likely be no-shows, therefore they overbook. Unsurprisingly, overbooking sometimes leads to would-be passengers getting bumped from flights. It may also happen if a plane is too heavy, or to make room for an air marshal or relocate staff (reminiscent of the infamous United Airlines incident).

The Department of Transportation requires that airlines first ask for volunteers to switch flights. Airlines will generally offer incentives such as a travel voucher for a future flight or a gift card. If you feel the offer is worth the inconvenience, go for it. Once an offer is accepted, however, you can't come back later and ask for more.

If there are no volunteers, the airline will choose who gets the heave-ho according to their own "bumping" policies—but federal rules kick in at that point. Exceptions are frequently made for those with disabilities, unaccompanied minors, and those with loyalty status, among others. Check-in order may play a role, too.

Carriers are required to deliver fliers to their destinations within a certain timeframe of their originally scheduled flight or they'll be on the hook for paying the passenger, up to a designated limit. Passengers have the right to demand a check instead of a voucher, and they keep their original ticket, which retains its value.

Once you cash the check, you lose any leverage in possibly obtaining a higher settlement (e.g., cost of being bumped exceeds what you were paid). If you haven't cashed it, you may be able to negotiate with the airline. If that's a no-go, filing a legal claim may be an option. •



## This Sign of Alzheimer's May Precede All Others

Familiar symptoms of Alzheimer's disease and dementia include memory loss; inability to follow or continue with a conversation; a decline in exercising good judgment; confusion as to what day, month, season, or year it is; and social withdrawal. But a recent study points to a warning sign that precedes all these symptoms, to the surprise of many.

According to research published in the *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease*, navigational issues may crop up before memory loss, and well before a clinical diagnosis of Alzheimer's is made. Participants in the study were asked to navigate a virtual maze on a computer, using various patterns and landmarks to find their way around. The study consisted of a control group of healthy subjects and a group who had preclinical Alzheimer's—they had a few markers but weren't clinically diagnosed.

The preclinical Alzheimer's test subjects had far greater difficulty assessing, mapping, and navigating their virtual environment than the healthy subjects, indicating a cognitive gap that may have previously gone unnoticed but is a sign of disease-related change.

The findings point to navigational tasks possibly being a potent tool for detecting Alzheimer's disease at its very earliest stages. This would enable patients to receive earlier medical interventions and support services to deal with later Alzheimer's-related changes, and to plan for the future and make their wishes known before the disease makes it more difficult to do so. •

# The Sunniest Places on Earth

Let's think sunny thoughts. Where are the most sun-soaked places on earth, meteorologically speaking?

Ellesmere Island in Canada during some parts of the year has bright sunshine for over 15 hours a day. Just one problem: The daily average temperature is 14 °F. It's weather fit for scientific researchers and military personnel only. And...there are other parts of the year when the sun never gets above the horizon for months at a time. Talk about a split personality.



Yuma, Arizona, is another interesting place, sun-wise. Weather-station records cite it as the sunniest place in the world. It has 11 hours of bright sunshine per day in the winter, and over 13 in the summer. In addition, high-pressure systems create many cloudless days. There's nowhere for the sun to hide.

The dirty little secret about many of the world's most sun-drenched places is that we don't have a lot of meteorological information on them, and they go unrecognized. For example, deserts are inhospitable for people and weather instruments alike. Scorching days, freezing nights, and wind-whipped sand have that effect.

A NASA project in 2007 used satellites to attempt to pinpoint the world's sunniest spots. Out at sea, the sunniest locale was a patch of the Pacific Ocean south of Hawaii. Over land, part of the Sahara Desert in Niger ranked most highly.

The world's sunniest places could one day, theoretically, have a major impact on energy needs. However, many of these locations are often the least accessible; transporting energy great distances may not be economically feasible; and many areas are in politically unstable countries. We'll leave you with that ray of sunshine. ●



## Did You Know?

According to aviation data companies that track such things, at any given moment during the past year there were an average of 9,728 planes in the air, carrying over 1.2 million people. The lightest day for air travel was January 1, 2017, when "just" 3,354 planes were in the air at the same time. The heaviest air travel day in the past year? That would be August 5, 2016, when nearly 13,000 planes were in the sky at the same time carrying over 1.5 million people! ●



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## Important Safety Warning from the CPSC

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) has issued an important alert urging consumers to immediately stop using LayZ Board self-balancing scooters (known as hoverboards). The CPSC has evidence that LayZ Board was the hoverboard involved in the tragic fire on March 10, 2017, in Harrisburg, PA, which took the lives of two young girls.

Numerous other fires have occurred in recent years as a result of the lithium-ion batteries in hoverboards, although this is the first fire that is believed to have directly led to fatalities.

The LayZ Board hoverboards were manufactured in Shenzhen, China, and more than 3,000 units were imported into the United States.

Due to the fire hazard posed to consumers of all ages by these hoverboards, the CPSC is urging the public to stop charging and stop using their LayZ Board. Consumers who choose to dispose of their hoverboards should take them to a local recycling center for safe handling of the lithium-ion battery.

**The CPSC is also asking the public to share this warning with friends and family so that no one else is injured by them.**

The LayZ Board is a two-wheeled, battery-powered, self-balancing scooter that has a pivoting platform intended for the rider's feet and does not have a handlebar. The name LayZ Board appears on the front of the product.

Note: The safety warning to stop use applies to LayZ Boards hoverboards, which is a different product from Lazyboard hoverboards. ●

