

## Watch out for bicyclists.

Here in Pinellas County, we have the beautiful Fred Marquis Pinellas Trail to ride our bikes upon. Unfortunately, elsewhere in our county we have few, if any bike paths or bicycle friendly roadways, but we do have thousands of bicycle enthusiasts, such as those who are members of the Suncoast Cycling Club, who are often seen riding in groups on the highways. What this means is, not only does the bicyclist need to be especially careful, if not defensive, while riding, but folks driving cars and trucks need to pay special attention to look out for these bicyclists as well. One of the most

frequent biking accidents we see in our personal injury practice is where a motor vehicle operator makes a right hand turn onto a road at a stop sign or red light, without double-checking to make sure that a bicyclist isn't about to enter into their vehicle's path of travel. Keep in mind that your vehicle's tinted window may prevent the bicyclist from making eye contact with you. These accidents often result in serious, if not deadly, injuries to the bicyclist. So, wait to make your turn, check one last time for someone about to cross in front of your vehicle, and permit the bicyclist to cross the street safely before making your turn.



### 7th Annual Dunedin Triathlon scheduled for June 6th

Roman & Roman is proud to announce that it is a sponsor of the Dunedin Triathlon again this year. The Dunedin Triathlon on Honeymoon Island is an annual swim, bike, run event. It is held at the Honeymoon State Park. The event is the primary fundraiser for the Rotary Club of Dunedin which provides local students with college scholarships, support for local civic projects, and funds many other worthy programs. The triathlon was pioneered in 2004 and has been recognized as a great race through one of the most beautiful areas on the west coast of Florida. Last year the event attracted more than 700 athletes of all ages for a fun spirited race. The 7th Annual Dunedin Triathlon at Honeymoon Island will take place on Sunday, June 6, 2010 at Honeymoon Island State Park, Dunedin, Florida. For more information about the triathlon check out their website: <http://www.dunedintrathlon.com>. We hope to see you there!



Check us out on Facebook at [Facebook.com/romanromanlaw](https://www.facebook.com/romanromanlaw) and on Twitter at [twitter.com/Plattorney](https://twitter.com/Plattorney).

# BIG RIGS = BIG PROBLEMS

We all know the feeling: that uncomfortable tightening of the chest we get when we look into our rearview mirror and see an 80,000-pound 18-wheeler truck barreling down on our back bumper. This feeling is not entirely irrational. According to federal statistics, such trucks cause thousands of collisions each year. Given a truck's size and weight, common sense tells us that a collision between a big rig and a car—or even an SUV—is likely to turn out badly for the car or SUV.

In a collision between a truck and a passenger automobile, the fatalities occur in the automobile 98% of the time. To put concrete numbers on the problem, in 2004, such crashes killed almost 5,200 people (12% of all traffic fatalities) and injured 116,000 more. This is the equivalent of 25 fully loaded jumbo jets crashing every year.

Some of the reasons are obvious: Trucks

are bigger, heavier, and longer than cars; they need more room to maneuver; and they take a lot more road to come to a stop.

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***Larger, longer, and heavier trucks require more braking time, meaning that they are more likely to be in a collision because they cannot stop.***

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Many collisions involving trucks are caused by the same things that cause run-of-the-mill car accidents: poorly maintained trucks, speeding, overly aggressive driving, failure to yield the right of way, or bad driving conditions caused by rain or snow, etc. However, there are many other causes of these collisions, causes that are avoidable.

One of the biggest causes of crashes is excessive truck size. Federal law currently

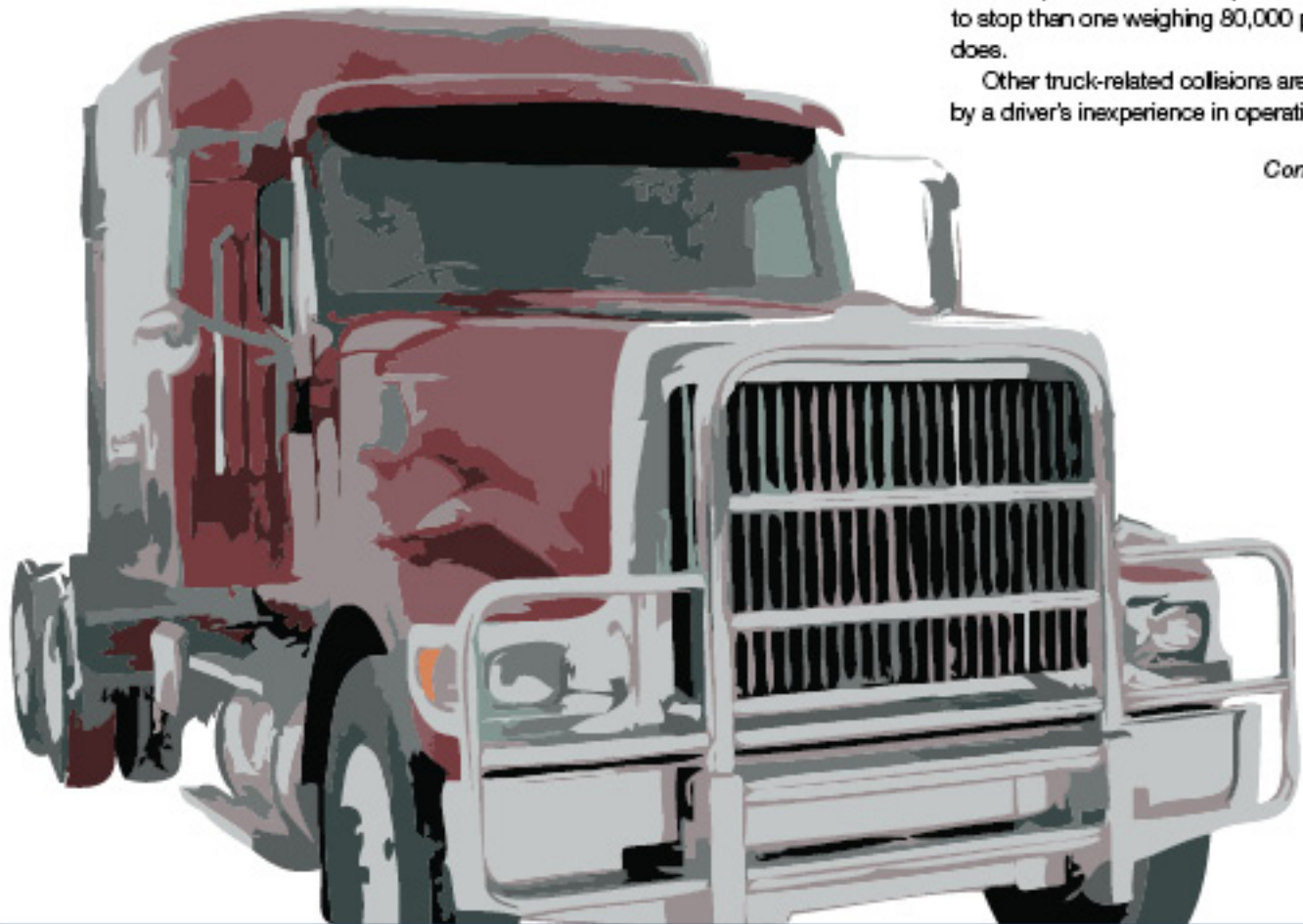
limits trucks to no more than 80,000 pounds in weight, but an 80,000-pound truck is more than twice as likely to be involved in a fatal accident as a 50,000-pound truck; furthermore, it causes more "wear and tear" to the roads.

Trucks are also getting longer, with the industry-standard trailer having grown from 40 feet long in the 1960s to 53 feet long today. Longer trucks mean larger blind spots, resulting in more accidents. Additionally, many roads (including interstates) were designed when trucks were shorter, and their ramps and merge lanes were not designed to handle today's longer trucks. As a result, these trucks cross over into other lanes of traffic, increasing the danger of a collision.

Larger, longer, and heavier trucks require more braking time, meaning that they are more likely to be in a collision because they cannot stop. For example, a truck weighing 100,000 pounds can take up to 25% longer to stop than one weighing 80,000 pounds does.

Other truck-related collisions are caused by a driver's inexperience in operating a

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## Big Rigs = Big Problems,

particular kind or size of truck. Still other collisions are caused by tired truckers who have been on the road for too long and are fatigued. This is an increasing problem with the deregulation of the trucking industry, changes in the ways goods are shipped to a "just-in-time" delivery system, and recent changes in the rules governing how long a trucker may drive before he is required to stop for a rest.

Suits involving truckers are often more difficult to prove than other kinds of collision suits, for several reasons. First, it may be difficult to find the truck's driver after the collision. The nature of a trucker's job means that he might be involved in a collision in a state far from where he lives and to which he will never return.

Insurance companies that insure trucking companies hire attorneys that are very skilled in defending against negligence claims. The insurance companies can be very aggressive in denying claims, because every dollar that they pay out in compensation to accident victims is a dollar that they get to keep.

Finally, most commercial big-rig accidents involve far more parties than the typical fender bender (the driver, the trucking company, multiple other drivers, companies that lease the rigs, the shipper(s), the insurance adjuster, and the insurer, just to name the most common), and the legal relationships among all of these parties can be difficult to unravel.

A person who has been involved in a collision with a trucker is entitled to recover an amount necessary to compensate him for his injuries. This amount may include compensation for such items as medical bills, time lost from work, pain and suffering, mental anguish, disfigurement, and loss of earning capacity. The complexity of these cases means that you should consult an experienced attorney and NOT rely on the trucking company's insurance adjuster to look out for your interests.

Call us if you or a loved one has been involved in a big-rig collision.

## Hudson Rotary Club Gopher Run 5K & 1 Mile Fun Run/Walk



*Overall first place finisher, Pedro Rodriguez of Wesley Chapel, receiving his medal*

Peter Roman has been an active member of the Hudson Rotary Club since 2008. This year, Roman & Roman sponsored one of the Rotary Club's big annual events, the Gopher 5K & 1 Mile Fun Run/Walk, which took place on April 10, 2010. The race started promptly at 7:30 a.m. on Hudson Beach, and after winding through some quiet residential streets in the Hudson area, it finished where it started with an awards ceremony, complete with beverages and breakfast items for the competitors and fans. As always, this year's run was a real family event which was attended by all ages, from 8 to 88. Roman & Roman looks forward to actively participating again in next year's event.

## PREVENT BURGLARY

Approximately every 15 seconds, a house is robbed somewhere in America. A few simple precautions can make your home a less-inviting target and can convince burglars to try their luck elsewhere.

- Install deadbolt locks on all outside doors, and make sure that all windows (not just those on the ground floor) have good, strong locks;
- Keep your property well lighted and consider installing outdoor lights hooked to motion sensors—thieves hate it when they can't hide;
- Keep trees and shrubbery cut back from windows so thieves do not have a place to hide;
- If you are leaving town for several days, suspend mail and newspaper delivery, and ask a trusted neighbor to keep an eye on your home;
- If you are not at home, keep a light on so the house looks occupied;
- Consider an alarm system monitored by a reputable security company;
- Keep a car parked in your driveway. Like lights, it makes the house look occupied and stops burglars from backing up a van and cleaning you out.
- Finally, remember that even the best precautions do not work if you don't use them! So give your home a security checkup, keep those doors and windows locked, and beat burglars at their own game.



## Event Spotlight

**Left, top:** 2009 Kiwanis Morton Plant Mease Midnight Run winner (female 14-16) Rebecca Roman, daughter of Attorney Tom Roman. Throughout the 30 years the Kiwanis Clubs of Dunedin and Countryside have hosted the event, they have raised over \$540,000 for the Dunedin and Countryside communities. This year's Midnight Run takes place on July 3rd and 4th, 2010, and Roman & Roman is, once again, a proud sponsor and supporter.

Visit [www.kiwanismidnightrun.com](http://www.kiwanismidnightrun.com) or [www.facebook.com/kiwanismidnightrun](http://www.facebook.com/kiwanismidnightrun) for more information.

**Left, bottom:** The competitors of the 2010 Florida State Strongman Championship. Proudly sponsored by Roman & Roman, P.A.



## Thank you

for trusting our firm with your legal needs. If you or someone you know has been injured due to the carelessness of another, please call us.

We want to help.

## Behind The Scenes

**P**aula is a partner of Roman & Roman, P.A. She was born in New Jersey and comes from a family with four brothers. She grew up on the New Jersey shore. After moving with her family to Florida in 1968, Paula attended the University of Florida and graduated with high honors and a bachelor's degree in nursing. She worked as a registered nurse in various hospitals in Florida for ten years prior to making her career change decision to become a lawyer. Paula attended Stetson University College of Law while at



the same time raising her son, Michael, as a single parent. She graduated from law school with honors in 1986 and began her legal career as an associate attorney in a Tampa insurance defense law firm. In 1987 she joined her

brother's law firm in Dunedin and has been a partner in Roman & Roman, P.A., for nearly 23 years. Paula's medical background has given her that special edge in representing personal injury clients. Paula is a member of the Florida Bar and

is admitted to practice before the United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida. She is a member of the Florida Justice Association. She serves on the board of directors and is acting secretary for The Kiwanis Club of Dunedin and is involved in many community service activities which benefit children in the Pinellas County area. Paula enjoys anything having to do with water sports, boating and shell-collecting. She also loves to hike and canoe. If you ask her where is her most favorite place to spend leisure time, she'll probably say "anywhere that requires a boat or canoe to get there!"