

# LAWYERS JOURNAL

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## ACBA implements more technology upgrades

by Tracy Carbasho

The ACBA continues to improve its overall efficiency by upgrading its Information Technology systems.

At the beginning of this year, the ACBA implemented an association management software system, which interfaces with every activity, process and function of the association and the Allegheny County Bar Foundation. Additional technology improvements were made recently to ensure the association and its members benefit from the most modern and secure IT solutions.

Mike Miller, director of the ACBA's Information Systems Department, recently explained the upgrades that were made.

"We upgraded network hardware. These were the network switches that were scheduled to be replaced during this budget cycle due to their age," he said. "We also added Wi-Fi to our network and changed our backups."

The ACBA used to have servers at the City-County Building as part of its

disaster recovery plan. However, since ACBA executives have decided to no longer lease space in this particular building, a server was installed at the association's headquarters in the Koppers Building to safeguard its data. All data is also replicated to cloud storage and is encrypted.

Miller said the server was supplied by the Connecticut-based Datto, a provider of data backup, recovery and business continuity solutions. The installation was completed with the help of Sierra w/o Wires Inc., a Pittsburgh provider of IT managed services and support. The data is stored in at least two remote locations, offering further protection from loss.

Andy Boggess, business development manager for Sierra w/o Wires, said the company has been serving the Pittsburgh area for 11 years. The company has customers in 32 states and Canada, all supported by the Pittsburgh headquarters. He said the server is critical for data backup.

"This server allows for incremental block level backups to be performed

on a timed basis. The solution allows for a full disaster recovery scenario where we can virtualize the servers being backed up in the event of a hardware failure locally on the machine," said Boggess. "We can also do full granular recovery of all files and folders. This added advantage to the device is for the backup of the servers to be sent offsite. In the case of a disaster and everything is destroyed, we can virtualize from the co-location site and have the business back up and running in 24 hours."

Miller said the upgrade has increased the speed of the ACBA's internal network due to newer technology. ACBA members may notice a slight increase in speed when visiting the association's website, but they may not be able to tell a difference depending on the speed of their own connection.

The technology enhancements have been completed and Miller said no further upgrades are planned for this fiscal year, unless a necessity arises. ■

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# Autonomous vehicles may impact legal profession



Brad E. Haas

by Brad E. Haas

In today's modern world, it is vital for lawyers and law firms to remain cognizant of the ways in which technological advances may impact the industry.

One area in which this sentiment will become increasingly important is the field of driverless automobiles. In a recent *Forbes* article, software expert Carl Bass stated, "Fifty years from now, our kids and grandkids are going to look back and say 'I can't believe they actually drove their own car back then.'"

While there remains a plethora of legal and social issues that must be dealt with in this field, many experts

predict that a world of driverless vehicles may be closer than many people realize. The effect of autonomous vehicles will be widespread and is certain to have an immense impact within many areas of the law. While these vehicles may not be of an immediate concern to the legal world, their potential effect on practice area revenue streams must be considered to ensure the vitality of lawyers and law firms.

This article will briefly discuss some of the most basic ways in which autonomous vehicles may affect the future of legal practice.

The obvious area in which these vehicles will have an effect is the field of personal injury law. While this may not be an area of significant concern to major law firms, many small firms and solo practitioners make a living off of typical red car/blue car automobile accidents. Each year, about 30,000 people die from car accidents with another two million being injured. More than 90 percent of these accidents are caused by human error.

The high volume of automobile accidents leads to a high volume of personal injury cases being filed. In Pennsylvania in 2013, motor vehicle-related cases accounted for over 13 percent of all civil cases statewide. It logically follows that with the amount of human error accidents being reduced by software that will automatically stop or slow down a vehicle, the number of accidents, injuries and lawsuits will be reduced.

While the introduction of driverless vehicles may most directly impact

personal injury cases, several other practices will experience the indirect effects of reduced motor vehicle accidents. Many lawsuits in different practice areas often originate with a motor vehicle accident. With a decrease in auto accidents, several fields can expect to experience change in the volume and manner of cases, such as subrogation, dram shop actions, insurance coverage, criminal cases, etc.

The reduced amount of accidents will also certainly have an impact on the thousands of medical malpractice cases filed each year, many of which begin with an underlying motor vehicle accident. All of these filings stand to be reduced significantly in the future as autonomous vehicles become more widely available.

While standard negligence lawsuits relating to motor vehicle accidents are predicted to decrease, it is expected that the area of product liability will see an increase with the introduction of driverless cars. Computers are not perfect and it can be assumed that accidents will still occur, albeit at lower rates. With humans no longer controlling vehicles, the burden is likely to shift from the individual to the manufacturer. Product liability law does not currently have a framework to deal with this futuristic situation and, as such, courts and legislatures will need to adopt new liability formats to determine responsibility by using traditional product liability principles.

The majority of product liability lawsuits with respect to autonomous vehicles will likely still fall under the

traditional three theories of manufacturing defects, design defects, and failure to warn. Manufacturing defects will be implicated when a driverless vehicle is not produced according to its specification. Design defects will be alleged when a foreseeable risk of harm relating to the use of a driverless vehicle could have been reduced or avoided by use of a reasonable alternative design. Failure to warn claims will be based on a manufacturer's duty to provide instruction about how the vehicle can be safely used and to warn consumers of any hidden dangers.

The increase in product liability lawsuits based on autonomous vehicles will also have a significant economic influence on the way cases are handled. Today, a standard personal injury case arising out of a motor vehicle accident requires significantly less expense and time for both the lawyers and clients involved. Under any of the above mentioned product liability theories, expert testimony will be needed in nearly every case. As the complexity of the technology required for autonomous vehicles will be of a great magnitude, a plaintiff will need to prove his or her case through expert testimony in order to properly explain issues involving product safety, risk/utility, etc.

The increased cost associated with expert testimony in these cases will require plaintiffs' attorneys to consider the potential drawback of a defense verdict to a much greater deal as opposed to a modern day negligence

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