

**New and updated instructions in this 2024 edition of
North Carolina Pattern Jury Instructions for Civil Cases**

This edition contains a new table of contents for the civil instructions, a number of replacement instructions for civil cases, and a new civil index. To update your printed edition, print and place the instructions listed below in the proper numerical sequence of your previous edition. Old instructions with the same number should be discarded.

Interim Instructions. As the Pattern Jury Instructions Committee considers new or updated instructions, it posts Interim Instructions that are too important to wait until June to distribute as part of the annual hard copy supplements to the School of Government website at sog.unc.edu/programs/ncpij. You may check the site periodically for these instructions or join the Pattern Jury Interim Instructions Listserv to receive notification when instructions are posted to the website.

Instructions with asterisk (*) are new instructions. All others replace existing instructions.

This 2024 edition contains the following new instructions identified with an asterisk (*), and revised instructions:

- 102.20 Proximate Cause—Peculiar Susceptibility.
- *102.22 Proximate Cause—Activation/Aggravation.
- 103.30 Agency Issue—Civil Conspiracy (One Defendant).
- 103.31 Agency Issue—Civil Conspiracy (Multiple Defendants).
- *502.00 Contracts—Issue of Breach.
- *502.03 Contracts—Issue of Breach by Non-Performance.
- 502.05 Contracts—Issue of Breach by Repudiation.
- 502.10 Contracts—Issue of Breach by Prevention.
- *502.12 Contracts—Issue of Breach—Materiality.
- 503.06 Contracts—Issue of Common Law Remedy—Statement of Damages Issue.
- *503.09 Deleted. This instruction has been combined with 503.06.
- 503.79 Contracts—Issue of Common Law Remedy—Damages Mandate.
- *800.80 Invasion of Privacy—Use of Unmanned Aircraft System—Surveillance.
- *800.81 Invasion of Privacy—Use of Unmanned Aircraft System—Photographs.
- *800.82 Invasion of Privacy—Use of Unmanned Aircraft System—Number of Photographs.
- *800.83 Invasion of Privacy—Use of Unmanned Aircraft System—Actual Damages.
- *840.15 Easement by Plat.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

INTRODUCTION

GUIDE TO THE USE OF THIS BOOK

SIGNIFICANT NEW DEVELOPMENTS

NORTH CAROLINA PATTERN JURY INSTRUCTIONS FOR CIVIL CASES: *Dates the instructions were adopted are found in parentheses after the title of the instruction.

PART I. GENERAL

Chapter 1. Preliminary Instructions.

- 100.10 Opening Statement. (12/2004)
- 100.15 Cameras and Microphones in Courtroom. (5/2004)
- 100.20 Recesses. (6/2010)
- 100.21 Recesses. (6/2010)
- 100.40 Deposition Testimony. (5/2004)
- 100.44 Interrogatories. (12/2004)
- 100.70 Taking of Notes by Jurors. (5/2004)
- 101.00 Admonition to the Trial Judge on Stating the Evidence and Relating the Law to the Evidence. (10/1985)
- 101.05 Function of the Jury. (3/1994)
- 101.10 Burden of Proof and Greater Weight of the Evidence. (3/1994)
- 101.11 Clear, Strong, and Convincing Evidence. (11/2004)
- 101.14 Judicial Notice. (10/1983)
- 101.15 Credibility of Witness. (3/1994)
- 101.20 Weight of the Evidence. (3/1994)
- 101.25 Testimony of Expert Witness. (2/1994)
- 101.30 Testimony of Interested Witness. (3/1994)
- 101.32 Evidence—Limitation as to Parties. (10/1983)
- 101.33 Evidence—Limitation as to Purpose. (3/2017)
- 101.35 Impeachment of Witness by Prior Statement. (5/1992)
- 101.36 Impeachment of Witness or Party by Proof of Crime. (4/1986)
- 101.37 Evidence Relating to the Character Trait of a Witness (Including Party) for Truthfulness. (4/1986)
- 101.38 Evidence—Invocation by Witness of Fifth Amendment Privilege against Self-Incrimination. (5/2009)
- 101.39 Evidence—Spoliation by a Party. (6/2010)
- 101.40 Photograph, Videotape, Motion Pictures, X-Ray, Other Pictorial Representations; Map, Models, Charts—Illustrative and Substantive Evidence. (10/1985)
- 101.41 Stipulations. (1/1988)
- 101.42 Requests for Admissions. (1/1988)
- 101.43 Deposition Evidence. (4/1988)
- 101.45 Circumstantial Evidence. (10/1985)
- 101.46 Definition of [Intent] [Intentionally]. (12/2016)
- 101.50 Duty to Recall Evidence. (3/1994)

- 101.60 Issues. (3/1994)
- 101.62 Presumptions. (4/1984)
- 101.65 Peremptory Instruction. (8/1982)

Chapter 2. General Negligence Instructions.

- 102.10 Negligence Issue—Burden of Proof. (5/1994)
- 102.10A Negligence Issue—Stipulation of Negligence. (5/2009)
- 102.11 Negligence Issue—Definition of Common Law Negligence. (6/2018)
- 102.12 Negligence Issue—Definition of Negligence in and of Itself (Negligence *Per Se*). (8/2015)
- 102.13 Negligence of Minor Between Seven and Fourteen Years of Age. (6/2018)
- 102.14 Negligence Issue—No Duty to Anticipate Negligence of Others. (5/1994)
- 102.15 Negligence Issue—Doctrine of Sudden Emergency. (2/2022)
- 102.16 Negligence Issue—Sudden Emergency Exception to Negligence *Per Se*. (2/2022)
- 102.19 Proximate Cause—Definition; Multiple Causes. (5/2009))
- 102.20 Proximate Cause—Peculiar Susceptibility. (2/2024)
- 102.22 Proximate Cause—Activation/Aggravation. (2/2024)
- 102.26 Proximate Cause—Act of God. (5/1994)
- 102.27 Proximate Cause—Concurring Acts of Negligence. (3/2005)
- 102.28 Proximate Cause—Insulating Acts of Negligence. (6/2010)
- 102.30 Proximate Cause—Defense of Sudden Incapacitation. (2/2000)
- 102.32 Negligence Issue—Breach of Parent’s Duty to Supervise Minor Children. (5/1992)
- 102.35 Contentions of Negligence. (3/1994)
- 102.50 Final Mandate—Negligence Issue. (3/1994)
- 102.60 Concurring Negligence. (3/2005)
- 102.65 Insulating/Intervening Negligence. (6/2020)
- 102.84 Negligence—Infliction of Severe Emotional Distress. (2/2020)
- 102.85 Willful or Wanton Conduct Issue (“Gross Negligence”). (5/1997)
- 102.86 Willful or Wanton Conduct Issue (“Gross Negligence”)—Used to Defeat Contributory Negligence. (12/2003)
- 102.87 Willful and Malicious Conduct Issue—Used to Defeat Parent-Child Immunity. (3/2016)
- 102.90 Negligence Issue—Joint Conduct—Multiple Tortfeasors. (3/1994)
- 102.95 Architect—Project Expediter—Negligence in Scheduling. (5/2005)

Chapter 3. General Agency Instructions.

- 103.10 Agency Issue—Burden of Proof—When Principal Is Liable. (5/2023))
- 103.15 Independent Contractor. (5/1992)
- 103.30 Agency Issue—Civil Conspiracy (One Defendant). (5/2024)
- 103.31 Agency Issue—Civil Conspiracy (Multiple Defendants). (5/2024)
- 103.40 Disregard of Corporate Entity of Affiliated Company—Instrumentality Rule (“Piercing the Corporate Veil”). (6/2020)
- 103.50 Agency—Departure from Employment. (10/1985)
- 103.55 Agency—Willful and Intentional Injury Inflicted by an Agent. (10/1985)
- 103.70 Deleted (5/2023)

Chapter 3a. Contributory Negligence Instructions.

- 104.10 Contributory Negligence Issue—Burden of Proof—Definition. (6/2018)
- 104.25 Contributory Negligence of Minor Between Seven and Fourteen Years of Age. (6/2018)
- 104.35 Contentions of Contributory Negligence. (3/1994)

104.50 Final Mandate—Contributory Negligence Issue. (3/1994)

Chapter 4. Third Party Defendants.

108.75 Negligence of Third Party Tort-Feasor—Contribution. (10/1985)

Chapter 5. Summary Instructions.

150.10 Jury Should Consider All Contentions. (3/1994)

150.12 Jury Should Render Verdict Based on Fact, Not Consequences. (3/1994)

150.20 The Court Has No Opinion. (3/1994)

150.30 Verdict Must Be Unanimous. (3/1994)

150.40 Selection of Foreperson. (3/1994)

150.45 Concluding Instructions—When To Begin Deliberations, Charge Conference. (3/1994)

150.50 Failure of Jury to Reach a Verdict. (10/1980)

150.60 Discharging the Jury. (5/1988)

PART II. CONTRACTS

Chapter 1. General Contract Instructions.

501.00 Introduction to Contract Series. (5/2003)

Chapter 2. Issue of Formation of Contract.

501.01 Contracts—Issue of Formation—Common Law. (5/2022)

501.01A Contracts—Issue of Formation—UCC. (6/2018)

501.02 Contracts—Issue of Formation—Peremptory Instruction. (5/2003)

501.03 Contracts—Issue of Formation—Parties Stipulate the Contract. (5/2003)

501.05 Contracts—Issue of Formation—Defense of Lack of Mental Capacity. (6/2018)

501.10 Contracts—Issue of Formation—Defense of Lack of Mental Capacity—Rebuttal by Proof of Fair Dealing and Lack of Notice. (5/2003)

501.15 Contracts—Issue of Formation—Defense of Lack of Mental Capacity—Rebuttal by Proof of Necessities. (5/2003)

501.20 Contracts—Issue of Formation—Defense of Lack of Mental Capacity—Rebuttal by Proof of Ratification (Incompetent Regains Mental Capacity). (5/2003)

501.25 Contracts—Issue of Formation—Defense of Lack of Mental Capacity—Rebuttal by Proof of Ratification (by Agent, Personal Representative or Successor). (5/2003)

501.30 Contracts—Issue of Formation—Defense of Mutual Mistake of Fact. (6/2013)

501.35 Contracts—Issue of Formation—Defense of Undue Influence. (5/2003)

501.40 Contracts—Issue of Formation—Defense of Duress. (5/2003)

501.45 Contracts—Issue of Formation—Defense of Fraud. (5/2004)

501.50 Contracts—Issue of Formation—Defense of Grossly Inadequate Consideration (“Intrinsic Fraud”). (5/2003)

501.52 Contracts—Issue of Formation—Defense of Fraud in the Factum. (5/2003)

501.55 Contracts—Issue of Formation—Defense of Constructive Fraud. (6/2018)

501.60 Contracts—Issue of Formation—Defense of Constructive Fraud—Rebuttal by Proof of Openness, Fairness, and Honesty. (5/2003)

501.65 Contracts—Issue of Formation—Defense of Infancy. (5/2003)

501.67 Contracts—Issue of Formation—Defense of Infancy—Rebuttal by Proof of Emancipation. (5/2003)

501.70 Contracts—Issue of Formation—Defense of Infancy—Rebuttal by Proof of Ratification After Minor Comes of Age. (5/2003)

- 501.75 Contracts—Issue of Formation—Defense of Infancy—Rebuttal by Proof of Ratification by Guardian, Personal Representative or Agent. (5/2003)
- 501.80 Contracts—Issue of Formation—Defense of Infancy—Rebuttal by Proof of Necessities. (5/2003)

Chapter 3. Issue of Breach.

- 502.00 Contracts—Issue of Breach. (1/2024)
- 502.03 Contracts—Issue of Breach by Non-Performance. (12/2023)
- 502.05 Contracts—Issue of Breach By Repudiation. (3/2024)
- 502.10 Contracts—Issue of Breach By Prevention. (2/2023)
- 502.12 Contracts—Issue of Breach—Materiality. (2/2024)
- 502.15 Contracts—Issue of Breach—Defense of Waiver. (5/2004)
- 502.20 Contracts—Issue of Breach—Defense of Prevention by Plaintiff. (5/2003)
- 502.25 Contracts—Issue of Breach—Defense of Frustration of Purpose. (6/2014)
- 502.30 Contracts—Issue of Breach—Defense of Impossibility (Destruction of Subject Matter of Contract). (6/2014)
- 502.35 Contracts—Issue of Breach—Defense of Impossibility (Death, Disability, or Illness of Personal Services Provider). (6/2014)
- 502.40 Contracts—Issue of Breach—Defense of Illegality or Unenforceability. (2/2020)
- 502.45 Contracts—Issue of Breach—Defense of Unconscionability. (5/2003)
- 502.47 Contracts—Issue of Breach—Direct Damages—Defense of Oral Modification of Written Contract. (5/2003)
- 502.48 Contracts—Issue of Breach—Defense of Modification. (5/2003)
- 502.50 Contracts—Issue of Breach—Defense of Rescission. (5/2003)
- 502.55 Contracts—Issue of Breach—Defense of Novation. (5/2003)
- 502.60 Contracts—Issue of Breach—Defense of Accord and Satisfaction. (5/2003)

Chapter 4. Issue of Common Law Remedy.

- 503.00 Contracts—Issue of Common Law Remedy—Rescission. (5/2003)
- 503.01 Contracts—Issue of Common Law Remedy—Rescission—Measure of Restitution. (6/2014)
- 503.03 Contracts—Issue of Common Law Remedy—Specific Performance. (5/2003)
- 503.06 Contracts—Issue of Common Law Remedy—Statement of Damages Issue. (3/2024)
- 503.09 Deleted. This instruction has been combined with 503.06. (3/2024)
- 503.12 Contracts—Issue of Common Law Remedy—Direct Damages—Buyer’s Measure of Recovery for a Seller’s Breach of Contract to Convey Real Property. (5/2003)
- 503.15 Contracts—Issue of Common Law Remedy—Direct Damages—Seller’s Measure of Recovery for a Buyer’s Breach of Executory Contract to Purchase Real Property. (5/2003)
- 503.18 Contracts—Issue of Common Law Remedy—Direct Damages—Broker’s Measure of Recovery for a Seller’s Breach of an Exclusive Listing Contract. (5/2003)
- 503.21 Contracts—Issue of Common Law Remedy—Direct Damages—Owner’s Measure of Recovery for a Contractor’s Partial Breach of a Construction Contract. (5/2003)
- 503.24 Contracts—Issue of Common Law Remedy—Direct Damages—Owner’s Measure of Recovery for a Contractor’s Partial Breach of a Construction Contract Where Correcting the Defect Would Cause Economic Waste. (5/2003)
- 503.27 Contracts—Issue of Common Law Remedy—Direct Damages—Owner’s Measure of Recovery for a Partial Breach of a Repair or Services Contract. (5/2003)

503.30	Contracts—Issue of Common Law Remedy—Direct Damages—Owner’s Measure of Recovery for a Contractor’s Failure to Perform any Work Under a Construction, Repair, or Services Contract. (5/2003)
503.33	Contracts—Issue of Common Law Remedy—Direct Damages—Contractor’s Measure of Recovery for an Owner’s Breach of a Construction, Repair, or Services Contract Where the Contractor Has Fully Performed. (5/2003)
503.36	Contracts—Issue of Common Law Remedy—Direct Damages—Contractor’s Measure of Recovery for an Owner’s Breach of a Construction, Repair, or Services Contract Where the Contractor Has Not Begun Performance. (5/2003)
503.39	Contracts—Issue of Common Law Remedy—Direct Damages—Contractor’s Measure of Recovery for an Owner’s Breach of a Construction, Repair, or Services Contract After the Contractor Delivers Partial Performance. (5/2003)
503.42	Contracts—Issue of Common Law Remedy—Direct Damages—Contractor’s Measure of Recovery for an Owner’s Breach of a Construction, Repair, or Services Contract Where the Contractor Elects to Recover Preparation and Performance Expenditures. (5/2003)
503.45	Contracts—Issue of Common Law Remedy—Direct Damages—Owner’s Measure of Recovery for Loss of Rent due to a Lessee’s, Occupier’s, or Possessor’s Breach of Lease of Real Estate or Personal Property. (5/2003)
503.48	Contracts—Issue of Common Law Remedy—Direct Damages—Owner’s Measure of Recovery for Loss of Use Due to a Lessee’s, Occupier’s, or Possessor’s Breach of Lease of Real Estate or Personal Property. (5/2003)
503.51	Contracts—Issue of Common Law Remedy—Direct Damages—Owner’s Measure of Recovery for Real Estate or Personal Property Idled by Breach of a Contract Where Proof of Lost Profits or Rental Value Is Speculative. (5/2003)
503.54	Contracts—Issue of Common Law Remedy—Direct Damages—Employer’s Measure of Recovery for Employee’s Wrongful Termination of an Employment Contract. (5/2003)
503.70	Contracts—Issue of Common Law Remedy—Incidental Damages. (5/2003)
503.73	Contracts—Issue of Common Law Remedy—Consequential Damages. (5/2003)
503.75	Breach Of Contract—Special Damages—Loss Of Profits (Formerly 517.20) (6/2013)
503.76	Contracts—Issue of Common Law Remedy—Future Worth of Damages in Present Value. (5/2003)
503.79	Contracts—Issue of Common Law Remedy—Damages Mandate. (5/2024)
503.90	Contracts—Issue of Common Law Remedy—Defense (Offset) for Failure to Mitigate. (5/2003)
503.91	Contracts—Issue of Common Law Remedy—Defense (Offset) for Failure to Mitigate—Amount of Credit. (5/2003)
503.94	Contracts—Issue of Common Law Remedy—Validity of Liquidated Damages Provision. (5/2003)
503.97	Contracts—Issue of Common Law Remedy—Amount of Liquidated Damages. (5/2003)
	Chapter 5. Issue of UCC Remedy.
504.00	Contracts—Issue of UCC Remedy—Buyer’s Damages Upon Seller’s Repudiation. (5/2003)
504.03	Contracts—Issue of UCC Remedy—Buyer’s Damages Upon Seller’s Failure to Make Delivery or Tender. (5/2003)
504.06	Contracts—Issue of UCC Remedy—Buyer’s Remedy of Rightful Rejection. (5/2003)
504.09	Contracts—Issue of UCC Remedy—Buyer’s Damages Upon Rightful Rejection. (5/2003)

504.12	Contracts—Issue of UCC Remedy—Buyer’s Remedy of Justifiable Revocation of Acceptance. (5/2003)
504.15	Contracts—Issue of UCC Remedy—Buyer’s Damages Upon Justifiable Revocation of Acceptance. (5/2003)
504.18	Contracts—Issue of UCC Remedy—Buyer’s Damages After Acceptance and Retention of Goods. (5/2003)
504.21	Contracts—Issue of UCC Remedy—Buyer’s Remedy of Specific Performance. (5/2003)
504.24	Contracts—Issue of UCC Remedy—Seller’s Remedy (or Defense) of Stopping Delivery of Goods. (5/2003)
504.27	Contracts—Issue of UCC Remedy—Seller’s Remedy (or Defense) of Reclaiming Goods Already Delivered. (5/2003)
504.30	Contracts—Issue of UCC Remedy—Seller’s Remedy of Resale. (5/2003)
504.33	Contracts—Issue of UCC Remedy—Seller’s Resale Damages. (5/2003)
504.36	Contracts—Issue of UCC Remedy—Seller’s Contract—Market Damages. (5/2003)
504.39	Contracts—Issue of UCC Remedy—Seller’s Lost Profit Damages. (5/2003)
504.42	Contracts—Issue of UCC Remedy—Seller’s Remedy of Action for Price (Specific Performance) for Delivered Goods. (5/2003)
504.45	Contracts—Issue of UCC Remedy—Seller’s Remedy of Action for Price (Specific Performance) for Undelivered Goods. (5/2003)
504.48	Contracts—Issue of UCC Remedy—Defense (Offset) of Failure to Mitigate. (5/2003)
504.51	Contracts—Issue of UCC Remedy—Validity of Liquidated Damages Provision. (5/2003)
504.54	Contracts—Issue of UCC Remedy—Amount of Liquidated Damages. (5/2003)

Chapter 6. Minor’s Claims Where Contract Disavowed.

505.20	Contracts—Issue of Remedy—Minor’s Claim for Restitution Where Contract Is Disavowed. (5/2003)
505.25	Contracts—Issue of Remedy—Minor’s Claim for Restitution Where Contract Is Disavowed—Measure of Recovery. (5/2003)

Chapter 7. Agency.

516.05	Agency in Contract—Authority of General Agent or Actual and Apparent. (1/2019)
516.15	Agency—Ratification. (1/2019)
516.30	Agency—Issue of Undisclosed Principal—Liability of Agent. (4/2005)
517.20	Breach of Contract—Special Damages—Loss of Profits. (6/2013)

Chapter 8. Deleted. (5/2003)

Chapter 9. Action on Account.

635.20	Action on Unverified Account—Issue of Liability. (5/1991)
635.25	Action on Unverified Account—Issue of Amount Owed. (5/1991)
635.30	Action on Verified Itemized Account. (5/1991)
635.35	Action on Account Stated. (6/2014)
635.40	Action on Account—Defense of Payment. (5/1991)

Chapter 10. Employment Relationship.

640.00	Introduction to “Employment Relationship” Series. (6/2014)
640.00A	Introduction to “Employment Relationship” Series (Delete Sheet). (6/2010)
640.01	Employment Relationship—Status of Person as Employee. (6/2018)
640.02	Employment Relationship—Constructive Termination. (6/2010)
640.03	Employment Relationship—Termination/Resignation. (6/2010)

640.10	Employment Relationship—Employment for Definite Term. (2/1991)
640.12	Employment Relationship—Breach of Agreement for Definite Term. (5/1991)
640.14	Employment Relationship—Employer’s Defense of Just Cause. (2/1991)
640.20	Employment Relationship—Wrongful (Tortious) Termination. (3/2017)
640.22	Employment Relationship—Employer’s Defense to Wrongful (Tortious) Termination. (4/1998)
640.25	Employment Relationship—Blacklisting. (11/1996)
640.27	Employment Discrimination—Pretext Case. (6/2018)
640.28	Employment Discrimination—Mixed Motive Case. (5/2004)
640.29A	Employment Relationship—Adverse Employment Action in Violation of the North Carolina Whistleblower Act—Introduction. (6/2018)
640.29B	Employment Relationship—Adverse Employment Action in Violation of the North Carolina Whistleblower Act— <i>Direct Admission Case</i> . (6/2010)
640.29C	Employment Relationship—Adverse Employment Action in Violation of the North Carolina Whistleblower Act— <i>Pretext Case</i> . (6/2010)
640.29D	Employment Relationship—Adverse Employment Action in Violation of the North Carolina Whistleblower Act— <i>Mixed Motive Case</i> (Plaintiff). (6/2010)
640.29E	Employment Relationship—Adverse Employment Action in Violation of the North Carolina Whistleblower Act— <i>Mixed Motive Case</i> (Defendant). (5/2009)
640.30	Employment Relationship—Damages. (6/2010)
640.32	Employment Relationship—Mitigation of Damages. (6/2014)
640.40	Employment Relationship—Vicarious Liability of Employer for Co-Worker Torts. (6/2015)
640.42	Employment Relationship—Liability of Employer for Negligence in Hiring, Supervision, or Retention of an Employee. (5/2023)
640.43	Employment Relationship—Liability of Employer for Negligence in Hiring or Selecting an Independent Contractor. (5/2023)
640.44	Employment Relationship—Liability of Employer for Negligence in Retaining an Independent Contractor. (5/2023)
640.46	Employment Relationship—Liability of Employer for Injury to Employee—Exception to Workers’ Compensation Exclusion. (2/2017)
640.48	Employment Relationship—Liability of Principal for Negligence of Independent Contractor (Breach of Non-Delegable Duty of Safety)—Inherently Dangerous Activity. (5/2009)
640.60	Employment Relationships—Wage & Hour Act—Wage Payment Claim (2/2017)
640.65	Employment Relationships—Wage & Hour Act—Wage Payment Claim—Damages (6/2014)
640.70	Public Employee—Direct North Carolina Constitutional Claim—Enjoyment of Fruits of Labor. (2/2019)

Chapter 11. Covenants Not to Compete.

645.20	Covenants Not to Compete—Issue of the Existence of the Covenant. (6/2015)
645.30	Covenants Not to Compete—Issue of Whether Covenant was Breached. (5/1976)
645.50	Covenants not to Compete—Issue of Damages. (5/2006)

Chapter 12. Actions for Services Rendered a Decedent.

714.18	Products Liability—Military Contractor Defense. (6/2022)
735.00	Action for Services Rendered a Decedent—Issue of Existence of Contract. (11/2/2004)
735.05	Action for Services Rendered a Decedent—Evidence of Promise to Compensate by Will. (12/1977)

- 735.10 Action for Services Rendered a Decedent—Presumption that Compensation Is Intended. (5/1978)
- 735.15 Action for Services Rendered a Decedent—Presumption of Gratuity by Family Member. (12/1977)
- 735.20 Action for Services Rendered a Decedent—Issue of Breach of Contract. (12/1977)
- 735.25 Action for Services Rendered a Decedent—Issue of Recovery. (12/1977)
- 735.30 Action for Services Rendered a Decedent—Issue of Recovery—Benefits or Offsets. (10/1977)
- 735.35 Action for Services Rendered a Decedent—Issue of Recovery—Evidence of Value of Specific Property. (10/1977)
- 735.40 Action for Services Rendered a Decedent—Issue of Recovery—Statute of Limitations. (5/1978)

Chapter 13. Quantum Meruit.

- 736.00 Quantum Meruit—Quasi Contract—Contract Implied at Law. (5/2016)
- 736.01 Quantum Meruit—Quasi Contract—Contract Implied at Law: Measure of Recovery. (6/2015)

Chapter 14. Leases.

VOLUME II

Part III. WARRANTIES AND PRODUCTS LIABILITY

Chapter 1. Warranties in Sales of Goods.

- 741.00 Warranties in Sales of Goods. (5/1999)
- 741.05 Warranties in Sales of Goods—Issue of Existence of Express Warranty. (5/1999)
- 741.10 Warranties in Sales of Goods—Issue of Breach of Express Warranty. (5/1999)
- 741.15 Warranties in Sales of Goods—Issue of Existence of Implied Warranty of Merchantability. (6/2013)
- 741.16 Warranties in Sales of Goods—Issue of Seller’s Defense of Modification of Implied Warranty of Merchantability. (5/1999)
- 741.17 Warranties in Sales of Goods—Issue of Seller’s Defense of Exclusion of Implied Warranty of Merchantability. (5/1999)
- 741.18 Warranties in Sales of Goods—Issue of Seller’s Defense of Buyer’s Actual or Constructive Knowledge of Defects—Implied Warranty of Merchantability. (5/1999)
- 741.20 Warranties in Sales of Goods—Issue of Breach of Implied Warranty of Merchantability. (12/2003)
- 741.25 Warranties in Sales of Goods—Issue of Existence of Implied Warranty of Fitness for a Particular Purpose. (5/1999)
- 741.26 Warranties in Sales of Goods—Issue of Seller’s Defense of Modification of Implied Warranty of Fitness for a Particular Purpose. (5/1999)
- 741.27 Warranties in Sales of Goods—Issue of Seller’s Defense of Exclusion of Implied Warranty of Fitness for a Particular Purpose. (5/1999)
- 741.28 Warranties in Sales of Goods—Issue of Seller’s Defense of Buyer’s Actual or Constructive Knowledge of Defects—Implied Warranty of Fitness for a Particular Purpose. (5/1999)
- 741.30 Warranties in Sales of Goods—Issue of Breach of Implied Warranty of Fitness for a Particular Purpose. (5/1999)

741.31	Warranties in Sales of Goods—Issue of Existence of Implied Warranty Created by Course of Dealing or Usage of Trade. (5/1999)
741.32	Warranties in Sales of Goods—Issue of Seller’s Defense of Exclusion of Implied Warranty Created by Course of Dealing or by Usage of Trade. (5/1999)
741.33	Warranties in Sales of Goods—Issue of Seller’s Defense of Buyer’s Actual or Constructive Knowledge of Defects—Implied Warranty Created by Course of Dealing or by Usage of Trade. (5/1999)
741.34	Warranties in Sales of Goods—Issue of Breach of Implied Warranty Created by Course of Dealing or Usage of Trade. (5/1999)
741.35	Warranties in Sales of Goods—Remedies—Rightful Rejection. (5/1999)
741.40	Warranties in Sales of Goods—Rightful Rejection—Damages. (5/1999)
741.45	Warranties in Sales of Goods—Remedies—Justifiable Revocation of Acceptance. (5/1999)
741.50	Warranties in Sales of Goods—Justifiable Revocation of Acceptance—Damages. (5/1999)
741.60	Warranties in Sales of Goods—Remedy for Breach of Warranty Where Accepted Goods are Retained—Damages. (5/1999)
741.65	Express and Implied Warranties—Third Party Rights of Action (Horizontal) Against Buyer’s Seller. (5/1999)
741.66	Implied Warranties—Third Party Rights of Action (Horizontal) Against Manufacturers. (5/2006)
741.67	Implied Warranties—Third Party Rights of Action (Vertical) Against Manufacturers. (5/1999)
741.70	Products Liability—Claim of Inadequate Warning or Instruction. (5/2005)
741.71	Products Liability—Claim Against Manufacturer for Inadequate Design or Formulation (Except Firearms or Ammunition). (5/2005)
741.72	Products Liability—Firearms or Ammunition—Claim Against Manufacturer or Seller for Defective Design. (5/2005)

Chapter 2. Defenses By Sellers and Manufacturers.

743.05	Products Liability (Other than Express Warranty)—Seller’s Defense of Sealed Container or Lack of Opportunity to Inspect Product. (5/1999)
743.06	Products Liability—Exception To Seller’s Defense of Sealed Container or Lack of Opportunity to Inspect Product. (5/2004)
743.07	Products Liability—Seller’s and Manufacturer’s Defense of Product Alteration or Modification. (5/1999)
743.08	Products Liability—Seller’s and Manufacturer’s Defense of Use Contrary to Instructions or Warnings. (5/1999)
743.09	Products Liability—Seller’s and Manufacturer’s Defense of Unreasonable Use in Light of Knowledge of Unreasonably Dangerous Condition of Product. (5/1999)
743.10	Products Liability—Seller’s and Manufacturer’s Defense of Claimant’s Failure to Exercise Reasonable Care as Proximate Cause of Damage. (5/1999)
744.05	Products Liability (Other than Express Warranty)—Seller’s Defense of Sealed Container or Lack of Opportunity to Inspect Product. (5/1999)
744.06	Products Liability—Exception to Seller’s Defense of Sealed Container or Lack of Opportunity to Inspect Product. (5/2004)
744.07	Products Liability—Seller’s and Manufacturer’s Defense of Product Alteration or Modification. (5/1999)
744.08	Products Liability—Seller’s and Manufacturer’s Defense of Use Contrary to Instructions or Warnings. (6/2010)

- 744.09 Products Liability—Seller’s and Manufacturer’s Defense of Unreasonable Use in Light of Knowledge of Unreasonably Dangerous Condition of Product. (5/1999)
- 744.10 Products Liability—Seller’s and Manufacturer’s Defense of Claimant’s Failure to Exercise Reasonable Care as Proximate Cause of Damage. (5/1999)
- 744.12 Products Liability—Seller’s and Manufacturer’s Defense of Open and Obvious Risk. (5/1999)
- 744.13 Products Liability—Prescription Drugs—Seller’s and Manufacturer’s Defense of Delivery of Adequate Warning or Instruction to Prescribers or Dispensers. (5/1999)
- 744.16 Products Liability—Manufacturer’s Defense of Inherent Characteristic. (5/1999)
- 744.17 Products Liability—Prescription Drugs—Manufacturer’s Defense of Unavoidably Unsafe Aspect. (5/1999)
- 744.18 Products Liability—Statute of Limitations. (6/2010)
- 744.19 Products Liability—Military Contractor Defense. (6/2022)

Chapter 3. New Motor Vehicle Warranties (“Lemon Law”).

- 745.01 New Motor Vehicles Warranties Act (“Lemon Law”)—Manufacturer’s Failure to Make Repairs Necessary to Conform New Motor Vehicle to Applicable Express Warranties. (6/2013)
- 745.03 New Motor Vehicles Warranties Act (“Lemon Law”)—Manufacturer Unable to Conform New Motor Vehicle to Express Warranty. (6/2013)
- 745.05 New Motor Vehicles Warranties Act (“Lemon Law”)—Manufacturer’s Affirmative Defense of Abuse, Neglect, Odometer Tampering, or Unauthorized Modifications or Alterations. (6/2013)
- 745.07 New Motor Vehicles Warranties Act (“Lemon Law”)—Damages When Plaintiff is a Purchaser. (6/2015)
- 745.09 New Motor Vehicles Warranties Act (“Lemon Law”)—Damages When Plaintiff is a Lessee. (6/2015)
- 745.11 New Motor Vehicles Warranties Act (“Lemon Law”)—Damages When Plaintiff is a Lessor. (6/2015)
- 745.13 New Motor Vehicles Warranties Act (“Lemon Law”)—Unreasonable Refusal to Comply with Requirements of Act. (5/1999)

Chapter 4. New Dwelling Warranty.

- 747.00 Warranties in Sales of Dwellings—Issue of Existence of Implied Warranty of Habitability. (5/1999)
- 747.10 Warranties in Sales of Dwellings—Issue of Builder’s Defense that Buyer Had Notice of Defect. (5/1999)
- 747.20 Warranties in Sales of Dwellings—Issue of Breach of Implied Warranty of Habitability. (12/2003)
- 747.30 Warranties in Sales of Dwellings—Remedies—Rescission. (5/1999)
- 747.35 Warranties in Sales of Dwellings—Remedies—Special Damages Following Rescission. (5/1999)
- 747.36 Warranties in Sales of Dwellings—Remedies—Credit to Seller for Reasonable Rental Value. (5/1999)
- 747.40 Warranties in Sales of Dwellings—Remedies—Damages Upon Retention of Dwelling. (5/1999)

Part IV. MISCELLANEOUS TORTS

Chapter 1. Fraud, Breach of Fiduciary Duty, Constructive Fraud, and Negligent Misrepresentation.

800.00	Fraud. (6/2018)
800.00A	Fraud—Statute of Limitations (5/2016)
800.03	Definition of Fiduciary; Explanation of Fiduciary (2/2023)
800.04	Breach of Fiduciary Duty (5/2023)
800.05	Constructive Fraud. (2/2023)
800.06	Constructive Fraud—Rebuttal by Proof of Openness, Fairness and Honesty. (5/2022)
800.07	Fraud: Damages. (6/2007)
800.10	Negligent Misrepresentation. (3/2000)
800.11	Negligent Misrepresentation: Damages. (6/2007)

Chapter 2. Criminal Conversation and Alienation of Affections.

800.20	Alienation of Affection. (12/2016)
800.22	Alienation of Affections—Damages. (6/2007)
800.23	Alienation of Affection—Statute of Limitations. (6/2010)
800.23A	Alienation of Affection—Statute of Limitations. (6/2010)
800.25	Criminal Conversation. Adultery. (6/2010)
800.26	Alienation of Affection/Criminal Conversation—Damages. (6/2010)
800.27	Criminal Conversation—Statute of Limitations. (6/2015)
800.27A	Criminal Conversation—Statute of Limitations. (6/2015)

Chapter 3. Assault and Battery.

800.50	Assault. (2/1994)
800.51	Battery. (2/2016)
800.52	Assault or Battery—Defense of Self. (5/1994)
800.53	Assault and Battery—Defense of Family Member. (5/1994)
800.54	Assault and Battery—Defense of Another from Felonious Assault. (5/2004)
800.56	Assault and Battery—Defense of Property. (5/1994)

Chapter 3A. Infliction of Emotional Distress.

800.60	Intentional or Reckless Infliction of Severe Emotional Distress. (4/2004)
--------	---

Chapter 3B. Loss of Consortium.

800.65	Action for Loss of Consortium. (12/1999)
--------	--

Chapter 4. Invasion of Privacy.

800.70	Invasion of Privacy—Offensive Intrusion. (6/2013)
800.71	Invasion of Privacy—Offensive Intrusion—Damages. (6/2010)
800.72	Invasion of Privacy—Disclosure of Private Images. (5/2022)
800.73	Invasion of Privacy—Disclosure of Private Images—Actual Damages. (5/2022)
800.74	Invasion of Privacy—Disclosure of Private Images—Number of Days—Liquidated Damages. (5/2022)
800.75	Invasion of Privacy—Appropriation of Name or Likeness for Commercial Use. (5/2001)
800.76	Invasion of Privacy—Appropriation of Name or Likeness for Commercial Use—Damages. (5/2001)
800.80	Invasion of Privacy—Use of Unmanned Aircraft System—Surveillance. (3/2024)

- 800.81 Invasion of Privacy—Use of Unmanned Aircraft System—Photographs. (2/2024)
- 800.82 Invasion of Privacy—Use of Unmanned Aircraft System—Number of Photographs. (5/2024)
- 800.83 Invasion of Privacy—Use of Unmanned Aircraft System—Actual Damages. (5/2024)

Chapter 5. Malicious Prosecution, False Imprisonment, and Abuse of Process.

- 801.00 Malicious Prosecution—Criminal Proceeding. (6/2014)
- 801.01 Malicious Prosecution—Civil Proceeding. (1/1995)
- 801.05 Malicious Prosecution—Damages. (10/1994)
- 801.10 Malicious Prosecution—Punitive Damages—Issue of Existence of Actual Malice. (5/2001)
- 802.00 False Imprisonment. (6/2014)
- 802.01 False Imprisonment—Merchant’s Defenses. (5/2004)
- 803.00 Abuse of Process. (6/2012)
- 804.00 Section 1983—Excessive Force in Making Lawful Arrest. (5/2004)
- 804.01 Excessive Force in Making Arrest—Common Law Claim for Battery—Issue of Battery. (3/2016)
- 804.02 Excessive Force in Making Arrest—Common Law Claim for Battery—Issue of Lawfulness of Arrest. (3/2016)
- 804.03 Excessive Force in Making Arrest—Common Law Claim for Battery—Issue of Reasonableness of Force Used. (3/2016)
- 804.04 Excessive Force in Making Arrest—Common Law Claim for Battery—Damages (3/2016)
- 804.05 Excessive Force in Making Arrest—Common Law Claim for Battery—Sample Verdict Sheet. (3/2016)
- 804.06 Excessive Force in Making Arrest—Section 1983 Claim—Issue of Color of State Law. (3/2016)
- 804.07 Excessive Force in Making Arrest—Section 1983 Claim—Issue of Use of Force (3/2016)
- 804.08 Excessive Force in Making Arrest—Section 1983 Claim—Issue of Lawfulness of Arrest. (3/2016)
- 804.09 Excessive Force in Making Arrest—Section 1983 Claim—Issue of Reasonableness of Force Used. (3/2016)
- 804.10 Excessive Force in Making Arrest—Section 1983 Claim—Damages. (3/2016)
- 804.11 Excessive Force in Making Lawful Arrest—Section 1983 Claim—Punitive Damages. (3/2016)
- 804.12 Excessive Force in Making Arrest—Section 1983 Claim—Sample Verdict Sheet. (3/2016)
- 804.50 Section 1983—Unreasonable Search of Home. (6/2016)

Chapter 6. Nuisances and Trespass.

- 805.00 Trespass to Real Property. (6/2015)
- 805.05 Trespass to Real Property—Damages. (5/2001)
- 805.10 Trespass to Personal Property. (5/2001)
- 805.15 Trespass to Personal Property—Damages. (5/2001)
- 805.20 Private Nuisance. (3/2020)
- 805.21 Littering—Civil Action for Damages for Felonious Littering—Damages Issue. (4/2019)
- 805.25 Private Nuisance. (6/2022)
- 805.26 Private Nuisance—Nuisance by Waterflow (5/2023)

805.30 Private Nuisance—Damages (Real Property). (6/2022)

Chapter 7. Owners and Occupiers of Land.

805.50 Status of Party—Lawful Visitor or Trespassor. (5/1999)
805.55 Duty of Owner to Lawful Visitor. (1/2022)
805.56 Duty of Owner to Lawful Visitor—Defense of Contributory Negligence. (6/2018)
805.60 Duty of Owner to Licensee. (Delete Sheet). (5/1999)
805.61 Duty of Owner to Licensee—Defense of Contributory Willful or Wanton Conduct (“Gross Negligence”). (Delete Sheet). (5/1999)
805.64 Duty of Owner to Trespasser—Intentional Harms (6/2013)
805.64A Duty of Owner to Trespasser—Use of Reasonable Force Defense (6/2013)
805.64B Duty of Owner to Child Trespasser—Artificial Condition (6/2013)
805.64C Duty of Owner to Trespasser: Position of Peril (6/2013)
805.65 Duty of Owner to Trespasser. (6/2013)
805.65A Duty of Owner to Child Trespasser—Attractive Nuisance. (6/2013)
805.66 Duty of Owner to Trespasser—Defense of Contributory Willful or Wanton Conduct (“Gross Negligence”). (11/2004)
805.67 Duty of City or County to Users of Public Ways. (1/2022)
805.68 City or County Negligence—Defense of Contributory Negligence—Sui Juris Plaintiff. (5/1990)
805.69 City or County Negligence—Defense of Contributory Negligence—Handicapped Plaintiff. (5/1990)
805.70 Duty of Adjoining Landowners—Negligence. (5/1990)
805.71 Duty of Landlord to Residential Tenant—Residential Premises and Common Areas. (5/2022)
805.72 Duty of Landlord to Residential Tenant—Residential Premises and Common Areas—Defense of Contributory Negligence. (6/2018)
805.73 Duty of Landlord to Non-Residential Tenant—Controlled or Common Areas. (5/1990)
805.74 Duty of Landlord to Non-Residential Tenant—Controlled or Common Areas—Defense of Contributory Negligence. (6/2018)
805.80 Duty of Landlord to Tenant—Vacation Rental. (5/2001)

Chapter 8. Conversion.

806.00 Conversion. (5/1996)
806.01 Conversion—Defense of Abandonment. (5/1996)
806.02 Conversion—Defense of Sale (or Exchange). (5/1996)
806.03 Conversion—Defense of Gift. (4/2004)
806.05 Conversion—Damages. (5/1996)

Chapter 9. Defamation.

806.40 Defamation—Preface. (6/2021)
806.50 Defamation—Libel Actionable *Per Se*—Private Figure—Not Matter of Public Concern. (6/2021)
806.51 Defamation—Libel Actionable *Per Se*—Private Figure—Matter of Public Concern. (6/2021)
806.53 Defamation—Libel Actionable *Per Se*—Public Figure or Official. (6/2021)
806.60 Defamation—Libel Actionable *Per Quod*—Private Figure—Not Matter of Public Concern. (6/2021)
806.61 Defamation—Libel Actionable *Per Quod*—Private Figure—Matter of Public Concern. (6/2021)

806.62	Defamation—Libel Actionable <i>Per Quod</i> —Public Figure or Official. (6/2021)
806.65	Defamation—Slander Actionable <i>Per Se</i> —Private Figure—Not Matter of Public Concern. (6/2021)
806.66	Defamation—Slander Actionable <i>Per Se</i> —Private Figure—Matter of Public Concern. (6/2021)
806.67	Defamation—Slander Actionable <i>Per Se</i> —Public Figure or Official. (6/2021)
806.70	Defamation—Slander Actionable <i>Per Quod</i> —Private Figure—Not Matter of Public Concern. (6/2021)
806.71	Defamation—Slander Actionable <i>Per Quod</i> —Private Figure—Matter of Public Concern. (6/2021)
806.72	Defamation—Slander Actionable <i>Per Quod</i> —Public Figure or Official. (6/2021)
806.79	Defamation—Libel Actionable <i>Per Se</i> or Libel Actionable <i>Per Quod</i> —Private Figure—Not Matter of Public Concern—Defense of Truth. (6/2021)
806.81	Defamation Actionable <i>Per Se</i> —Private Figure—Not Matter of Public Concern—Presumed Damages. (6/2021)
806.82	Defamation Actionable <i>Per Se</i> —Private Figure—Matter of Public Concern—Presumed Damages. (6/2021)
806.83	Defamation Actionable <i>Per Se</i> —Public Figure or Official—Presumed Damages. (6/2021)
806.84	Defamation—Actual Damages. (6/2021)
806.85	Defamation—Private Figure—Matter of Public Concern—Issue of Actual Malice. (6/2021)

Chapter 10. Interference with Contracts.

807.00	Wrongful Interference with Contract Right. (6/2020)
807.10	Wrongful Interference with Prospective Contract. (6/2020)
807.20	Slander of Title. (11/2004)
807.50	Breach of Duty—Corporate Director. (3/2016)
807.52	Breach of Duty—Corporate Officer. (5/2002)
807.54	Breach of Duty—Controlling Shareholder of Closely Held Corporation—Issue of Closely Held Corporation. (5/2002)
807.56	Breach of Duty—Controlling Shareholder of Closely Held Corporation—Issue of Taking Improper Advantage of Power. (5/2002)
807.58	Breach of Duty—Controlling Shareholder of Closely Held Corporation—Issue of Taking Improper Advantage of Power—Defense of Good Faith, Care and Diligence. (5/2002)

Chapter 11. Medical Malpractice. Deleted.

Chapter 11A. Medical Negligence/Medical Malpractice.

809.00	Medical Negligence—Direct Evidence of Negligence Only. (6/2014)
809.00A	Medical Malpractice—Direct Evidence of Negligence Only. (1/2019)
809.03	Medical Negligence—Indirect Evidence of Negligence Only ("Res Ipsa Loquitur"). (6/2013)
809.03A	Medical Malpractice—Indirect Evidence of Negligence Only ("Res Ipsa Loquitur"). (5/2019)
809.05	Medical Negligence—Both Direct and Indirect Evidence of Negligence. (6/2014)
809.05A	Medical Malpractice—Both Direct and Indirect Evidence of Negligence. (5/2019)
809.06	Medical Malpractice—Corporate or Administrative Negligence by Hospital, Nursing Home or Adult Care Home. (5/2022)

809.07	Medical Negligence—Defense of Limitation by Notice or Special Agreement. (5/1998)
809.20	Medical Malpractice—Existence of Emergency Medical Condition. (6/2013)
809.22	Medical Malpractice—Emergency Medical Condition—Direct Evidence of Negligence Only. (5/2019)
809.24	Medical Malpractice—Emergency Medical Condition—Indirect Evidence of Negligence Only. ("Res Ipsa Loquitur"). (5/2019)
809.26	Medical Malpractice—Emergency Medical Condition—Both Direct and Indirect Evidence of Negligence. (5/2019)
809.28	Medical Malpractice—Emergency Medical Condition—Corporate or Administrative Negligence by Hospital, Nursing Home or Adult Care Home. (6/2012)
809.45	Medical Negligence—Informed Consent—Actual and Constructive. (5/2019)
809.65	Medical Negligence—Health Care Provider’s Liability for Acts of Non-Employee Agents—Respondeat Superior. (6/2012)
809.65A	Medical Malpractice—Health Care Provider’s Liability for Acts of Non-Employee Agents—Respondeat Superior. (5/2019)
809.66	Medical Negligence—Health Care Provider’s Liability for Acts of Non-Employee Agents—Respondeat Superior—Apparent Agency. (5/2019)
809.75	Medical Negligence—Institutional Health Care Provider’s Liability for Selection of Attending Physician. (5/2019)
809.80	Medical Negligence—Institutional Health Care Provider’s Liability for Agents; Existence of Agency. (6/2012)
809.90	Legal Negligence—Duty to Client (Delete Sheet) (6/2013)
809.100	Medical Malpractice—Damages—Personal Injury Generally. (6/2015)
809.114	Medical Malpractice Personal Injury Damages—Permanent Injury—Economic Damages. (6/2015)
809.115	Medical Malpractice Personal Injury Damages—Permanent Injury—Non-Economic Damages. (6/2015)
809.120	Medical Malpractice Personal Injury Damages—Final Mandate. (Regular). (6/2012)
809.122	Medical Malpractice—Personal Injury Damages—Final Mandate. (Per Diem Argument by Counsel). (6/2012)
809.142	Medical Malpractice—Damages—Wrongful Death Generally. (6/2015)
809.150	Medical Malpractice Wrongful Death Damages—Present Monetary Value of Deceased to Next-of-Kin—Economic Damages. (6/2015)
809.151	Medical Malpractice Wrongful Death Damages—Present Monetary Value of Deceased to Next-of-Kin—Non-Economic Damages. (6/2015)
809.154	Medical Malpractice Wrongful Death Damages—Final Mandate. (Regular). (6/2012)
809.156	Medical Malpractice Wrongful Death Damages—Final Mandate. (Per Diem Argument by Counsel). (6/2012)
809.160	Medical Malpractice—Damages—No Limit on Non-Economic Damages. (6/2015)
809.199	Medical Malpractice—Sample Verdict Form—Damages Issues. (6/2015)

Chapter 12. Damages.

810 Series	Reorganization Notice—Damages. (2/2000)
810.00	Personal Injury Damages—Issue and Burden of Proof. (6/2012)
810.02	Personal Injury Damages—In General. (6/2012)
810.04	Personal Injury Damages—Damages—Medical Expenses. (6/2013)
810.04A	Personal Injury Damages—Medical Expenses—Stipulation. (6/2013)
810.04B	Personal Injury Damages—Medical Expenses—Stipulation as to Amount Paid or Necessary to Be Paid, but Not Nexus to Conduct. (6/2013)

Page 16 of 24
N.C.P.I.–Civil Table of Contents
General Civil Volume
Replacement June 2024

810.04C	Personal Injury Damages—Medical Expenses—No Stipulation, No Rebuttal Evidence. (6/2013)
810.04D	Personal Injury Damages—Medical Expenses—No Stipulation, Rebuttal Evidence Offered. (6/2013)
810.06	Personal Injury Damages—Loss of Earnings. (2/2000)
810.08	Personal Injury Damages—Pain and Suffering. (5/2006)
810.10	Personal Injury Damages—Scarring or Disfigurement. (6/2010)
810.12	Personal Injury Damages—Loss (of Use) of Part of the Body. (6/2010)
810.14	Personal Injury Damages—Permanent Injury. (6/2015)
810.16	Personal Injury Damages—Future Worth in Present Value. (2/2000)
810.18	Personal Injury Damages—Set Off/Deduction of Workers’ Compensation Award. (11/1999)
810.20	Personal Injury Damages—Final Mandate. (Regular). (6/2012)
810.22	Personal Injury Damages—Final Mandate. (Per Diem Argument by Counsel). (6/2012)
810.24	Personal Injury Damages—Defense of Mitigation. (6/2018)
810.30	Personal Injury Damages—Loss of Consortium. (12/1999)
810.32	Personal Injury Damages—Parent’s Claim for Negligent or Wrongful Injury to Minor Child. (6/2010)
810.40	Wrongful Death Damages—Issue and Burden of Proof. (1/2000)
810.41	Wrongful Death Damages—Set Off/Deduction of Workers’ Compensation Award. (5/2017)
810.42	Wrongful Death Damages—In General. (6/2012)
810.44	Wrongful Death Damages—Medical Expenses. (6/2013)
810.44A	Wrongful Death Damages—Medical Expenses—Stipulation. (6/2013)
810.44B	Wrongful Death Damages—Medical Expenses—Stipulation as to Amount Paid or Necessary to Be Paid, but Not Nexus to Conduct. (6/2013)
810.44C	Wrongful Death Damages—Medical Expenses—No Stipulation, No Rebuttal Evidence. (6/2013)
810.44D	Wrongful Death Injury Damages—Medical Expenses—No Stipulation, Rebuttal Evidence Offered. (6/2013)
810.46	Wrongful Death Damages—Pain and Suffering. (1/2000)
810.48	Wrongful Death Damages—Funeral Expenses. (6/2013)
810.48A	Wrongful Death Damages—Funeral Expenses—Stipulation. (6/2013)
810.48B	Wrongful Death Damages—Funeral Expenses—Stipulation as to Amount Paid or Necessary to Be Paid, but Not Nexus to Conduct. (6/2013)
810.48C	Wrongful Death Damages—Funeral Expenses—No Stipulation, No Rebuttal Evidence. (6/2013)
810.48D	Wrongful Death Injury Damages—Funeral Expenses—No Stipulation, Rebuttal Evidence Offered. (6/2013)
810.49	Personal Injury Damages—Avoidable Consequences—Failure to Mitigate Damages. (Delete Sheet). (10/1999)
810.50	Wrongful Death Damages—Present Monetary Value of Deceased to Next-of-Kin. (6/2015)
810.54	Wrongful Death Damages—Final Mandate. (Regular). (6/2012)
810.56	Wrongful Death Damages—Final mandate. (Per Diem Argument by Counsel). (6/2012)
810.60	Property Damages—Issue and Burden of Proof. (4/2017)
810.62	Property Damages—Diminution in Market Value. (3/2023)
810.64	Property Damages—No Market Value—Cost of Replacement or Repair. (2/2000)

- 810.66 Property Damages—No Market Value, Repair, or Replacement—Recovery of Intrinsic Actual Value. (6/2013)
- 810.68 Property Damages—Final Mandate. (2/2000)
- 810.90 Punitive Damages—Issue of Existence of Outrageous or Aggravated Conduct. (5/1996)
- 810.91 Punitive Damages—Issue of Existence of Malicious, Willful or Wanton, or Grossly Negligent Conduct—Wrongful Death Cases. (5/1997)
- 810.92 Punitive Damages—Insurance Company’s Bad Faith Refusal to Settle a Claim. (5/1996)
- 810.93 Punitive Damages—Issue of Whether to Make Award and Amount. (5/1996)
- 810.94 Punitive Damages—Issue of Whether to Make Award and Amount. (Special Cases). (5/1996)
- 810.96 Punitive Damages—Liability of Defendant. (3/2016)
- 810.98 Punitive Damages—Issue of Whether to Make Award and Amount of Award. (5/2009)

Chapter 13. Legal Malpractice.

- 811.00 Legal Negligence—Duty to Client (Formerly 809.90) [as represented from Civil Committee] (3/2020)

Chapter 14. Animals.

- 812.00(Preface) Animals—Liability of Owners and Keepers. (2/2022)
- 812.00 Animals—Common Law (Strict) Liability of Owner for Wrongfully Keeping Vicious Domestic Animals. (5/2020)
- 812.01 Animals—Liability of Owner Who Allows Dog to Run at Large at Night. (8/2004)
- 812.02 Animals—Common Law Liability of Owner Whose Domestic Livestock Run at Large with Owner’s Knowledge and Consent. (5/1996)
- 812.03 Animals—Common Law Liability of Owner of Domestic Animals. (6/2011)
- 812.04 Animals—Owner’s Negligence In Violation of Animal Control Ordinance. (5/1996)
- 812.05 Animals—Liability of Owner of Dog Which Injures, Kills, or Maims Livestock or Fowl. (5/1996)
- 812.06 Animals—Liability of Owner Who Fails to Destroy Dog Bitten by Mad Dog. (5/1996)
- 812.07 Animals—Statutory (Strict) Liability of Owner of a Dangerous Dog. (5/1996)

Chapter 15. Trade Regulation.

- 813.00 Trade Regulation—Preface. (6/2013)
- 813.05 Model Unfair or Deceptive Trade Practice Charge. (6/2014)
- 813.20 Trade Regulation—Violation—Issue of Contracts and Conspiracies in Restraint of Trade. (1/1995)
- 813.21 Trade Regulation—Violation—Issue of Unfair Methods of Competition and Unfair or Deceptive Acts or Practices. (2/2020)
- 813.22 Trade Regulation—Violation—Definition of Conspiracy. (2/2019)
- 813.23 Trade Regulation—Violation—Issue of Price Suppression of Goods. (5/1997)
- 813.24 Trade Regulation—Violation—Issue of Condition Not to Deal in Goods of Competitor. (5/1997)
- 813.25 Trade Regulation—Violation—Issue of Predatory Acts with Design of Price Fixing. (5/1997)
- 813.26 Trade Regulation—Violation—Issue of Predatory Pricing. (5/1997)
- 813.27 Trade Regulation—Violation—Issue of Discriminatory Pricing. (5/1997)
- 813.28 Trade Regulation—Violation—Issue of Territorial Market Allocation. (5/1997)

813.29	Trade Regulation—Violation—Issue of Price Fixing. (5/1997)
813.30	Trade Regulation—Violation—Issue of Tying Between Lender and Insurer. (4/1995)
813.31	Trade Regulation—Violation—Unauthorized Disclosure of Tax Information. (3/1995)
813.33	Trade Regulation—Violations—Unsolicited Calls by Automatic Dialing and Recorded Message Players. (3/1995)
813.34	Trade Regulation—Violation—Work-at-Home Solicitations. (5/1995)
813.35	Trade Regulation—Violation—Issue of Representation of Winning a Prize. (5/1995)
813.36	Trade Regulation—Violation—Issue of Representation of Eligibility to Win a Prize. (5/1995)
813.37	Trade Regulation—Violation—Issue of Representation of Being Specially Selected. (5/1995)
813.38	Trade Regulation—Unfair and Deceptive Trade Practices—Simulation of Checks and Invoices. (5/1995)
813.39	Trade Regulation—Violation—Issue of Use of Term “Wholesale” in Advertising. G.S. 75-29. (5/1995)
813.40	Trade Regulation—Violation—Issue of Utilizing the Word “Wholesale” in Company or Firm Name. G.S. 75-29. (5/1995)
813.41	Trade Regulation—Violation—False Lien Or Encumbrance Against A Public Officer or Public Employee (6/2013)
813.60	Trade Regulation—Commerce—Introduction. (6/2015)
813.62	Trade Regulation—Commerce—Unfair and Deceptive Methods of Competition and Unfair or Deceptive Acts or Practices. (5/2020)
813.63	Trade Regulation—Commerce—Representation of Winning a Prize, Representation of Eligibility to Win a Prize, Representation of Being Specially Selected, and Simulation of Checks and Invoices. (1/1995)
813.70	Trade Regulation—Proximate Cause—Issue of Proximate Cause. (6/2014)
813.80	Trade Regulation—Damages—Issue of Damages. (5/2006)
813.90	Misappropriation of Trade Secret—Issue of Existence of Trade Secret. (6/2013)
813.92	Misappropriation of Trade Secret—Issue of Misappropriation. (6/2013)
813.94	Misappropriation of Trade Secret—Defense to Misappropriation. (6/2013)
813.96	Misappropriation of Trade Secret—Issue of Causation. (6/2013)
813.98	Misappropriation of Trade Secret—Issue of Damages. (5/2020)

Chapter 16. Bailment.

814.00	Bailments—Issue of Bailment. (5/1996)
814.02	Bailments—Bailee’s Negligence—Prima Facie Case. (5/1996)
814.03	Bailments—Bailee’s Negligence. (5/1996)
814.04	Bailments—Bailor’s Negligence. (5/1996)

Chapter 17. Fraudulent Transfer.

814.40	Civil RICO—Introduction (5/2016)
814.41	Civil RICO—Engaging in a Pattern of Racketeering Activity (5/2016)
814.42	Civil RICO—Enterprise Activity (5/2016)
814.43	Civil RICO—Conspiracy (5/2016)
814.44	Civil RICO—Attempt (5/2016)
814.50	Fraudulent Transfer—Present and Future Creditors—Intent to Delay, Hinder, or Defraud. (6/2018)
814.55	Fraudulent Transfer—Present and Future Creditors—Intent to Delay, Hinder, or Defraud—Transferee’s Defense of Good Faith and Reasonably Equivalent Value. (6/2015)

814.65	Fraudulent Transfer—Present and Future Creditors—Lack of Reasonably Equivalent Value. (2/2017)
814.70	Fraudulent Transfer—Present Creditors—Insolvent Debtor and Lack of Reasonably Equivalent Value. (5/2018)
814.75	Fraudulent Transfer—Present Creditors—Transfer to Insider While Insolvent. (6/2018)
814.80	Fraudulent Transfer—Present Creditors—Transfer to Insider While Insolvent—Defense of New Value Given. (2/2017)
814.81	Fraudulent Transfer—Present Creditors—Transfer to Insider While Insolvent—Defense of New Value Given—Amount of New Value (5/2017)
814.85	Fraudulent Transfer—Present Creditors—Transfer to Insider While Insolvent—Defense of Transfer in the Ordinary Course. (6/2015)
814.90	Fraudulent Transfer—Present Creditors—Transfer to Insider While Insolvent—Defense of Good Faith Effort to Rehabilitate. (6/2015)

Chapter 18. Budget Dispute Between Board of Education and Board of County Commissioners.

814.95	Budget Dispute Between Board of Education and Board of County Commissioners (5/2015)
814.95A	Budget Dispute Between Board of Education and Board of County Commissioners—Appendix— Sample Verdict Sheet (3/2016)

PART V. FAMILY MATTERS

815.00	Void Marriage—Issue of Lack of Consent. (8/2004)
815.02	Void Marriage—Issue of Lack of Proper Solemnization. (1/1999)
815.04	Void Marriage—Issue of Bigamy. (1/1999)
815.06	Void Marriage—Issue of Marriage to Close Blood Kin. (1/1999)
815.08	Invalid Marriage—Issue of Same Gender Marriage. (1/1999)
815.10	DivorceAbsolute—Issue of Knowledge of Grounds. (1/1999)
815.20	Voidable Marriage (Annulment)—Issue of Marriage of Person Under 16. (1/1999)
815.22	Voidable Marriage (Annulment)—Issue of Marriage of Person Under 16—Defense of Pregnancy or Living Children. (1/1999)
815.23	Voidable Marriage (Annulment)—Issue of Marriage of Person between 16 and 18. (1/1999)
815.24	Voidable Marriage (Annulment)—Issue of Impotence. (1/1999)
815.26	Voidable Marriage (Annulment)—Issue of Impotence—Defense of Knowledge. (1/1999)
815.27	Voidable Marriage (Annulment)—Issue of Duress. (5/2006)
815.28	Voidable Marriage (Annulment)—Issue of Lack of Sufficient Mental Capacity and Understanding. (1/1999)
815.29	Voidable Marriage (Annulment)—Issue of Undue Influence. (5/2006)
815.30	Voidable Marriage (Annulment)—Issues of Marriage to Close Blood Kin, Marriage of Person Under 16, Marriage of Person Between 16 and 18, Impotence and Lack of Sufficient Mental Capacity and Understanding—Defense of Cohabitation and Birth of Issue. (1/1999)

815.32	Voidable Marriage (Annulment)—Issues of Marriage of Person Under 16, Marriage of Person Between 16 and 18, Impotence, and Lack of Sufficient Mental Capacity and Understanding—Defense of Ratification. (1/1999)
815.40	Divorce—Absolute—Issue of One Year’s Separation. (8/2004)
815.42	Divorce—Absolute—Issue of One Year’s Separation—Defense of Mental Impairment. (1/1999)
815.44	Divorce—Absolute—Issue of Incurable Insanity. (1/1999)
815.46	Divorce—Absolute—Issue of Incurable Insanity—Defense of Contributory Conduct of Sane Spouse. (1/1999)
815.50	Divorce—From Bed and Board—Issue of Abandonment. (8/2004)
815.52	Divorce—From Bed and Board—Issue of Malicious Turning Out-of-Doors. (1/1999)
815.54	Divorce—From Bed and Board—Issue of Cruelty. (1/1999)
815.56	Divorce—From Bed and Board—Issue of Indignities. (8/2004)
815.58	Divorce—From Bed and Board—Issue of Excessive Use of Alcohol or Drugs. (1/1999)
815.60	Divorce—From Bed and Board—Issue of Adultery. (1/1999)
815.70	Alimony—Issue of Marital Misconduct. (6/2013)
815.71	Alimony—Issue of Condonation. (6/2009)
815.72	Alimony—Issue of Condonation—Violation of Condition. (3/2009)
815.75	Child Born Out of Wedlock—Issue of Paternity. (3/1999)
815.90	Parents’ Strict Liability for Personal Injury or Destruction of Property by Minor. G.S. 1-538.1. (3/1999)
815.91	Parents’ Strict Liability for Personal Injury or Destruction of Property by Minor—Issue of Damages. G.S. 1-538.1. (Delete Sheet). (3/1999)
815.92	Parents’ Strict Liability for Personal Injury or Destruction of Property by Minor—Defense of Removal of Legal Custody and Control. (3/1999)
817.00	Incompetency. (6/2007)

PART VI. LAND ACTIONS

Chapter 1. Adverse Possession.

820.00	Adverse Possession—Holding for Statutory Period. (4/2019)
820.10	Adverse Possession—Color of Title. (4/2019)
820.16	Adverse Possession by a Cotenant Claiming Constructive Ouster. (2/2017)

Chapter 2. Proof of Title.

820.40	Proof of Title—Real Property Marketable Title Act. (6/2018)
820.50	Proof of Title—Connected Chain of Title from the State. (5/2001)
820.60	Proof of Title—Superior Title from a Common Source—Source Uncontested. (5/2001)
820.61	Proof of Title—Superior Title from a Common Source—Source Contested. (5/2001)

Chapter 3. Boundary Dispute.

825.00	Processioning Action. (N.C.G.S. Ch. 38). (5/2020)
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Chapter 4. Eminent Domain—Initiated Before January 1, 1982. Deleted. (2/1999)

830.00	Eminent Domain—Procedures. (Delete Sheet). (2/1999)
830.05	Eminent Domain—Total Taking. (Delete Sheet). (2/1999)
830.10	Eminent Domain—Partial Taking—Fee. (Delete Sheet). (2/1999)

830.15	Eminent Domain—Partial Taking—Easement. (Delete Sheet). (2/1999)
830.20	Eminent Domain—General and Special Benefits. (Delete Sheet). (2/1999)
830.30	Eminent Domain—Comparables. (Delete Sheet). (2/1999)

Chapter 5. Eminent Domain—Initiated on or After January 1, 1982.

835.00	Eminent Domain—Series Preface. (4/1999)
835.05	Eminent Domain—Introductory Instruction. (8/2015)
835.05i	Eminent Domain—Introductory Instruction. (Delete Sheet). (8/2015)
835.10	Eminent Domain—Issue of Just Compensation—Total Taking by Department of Transportation or by Municipality for Highway Purposes. (4/2020)
835.12	Eminent Domain—Issue of Just Compensation—Partial Taking by Department of Transportation or by Municipality for Highway Purposes. (4/2019)
835.12A	Eminent Domain—Just Compensation—Partial Taking by Department of Transportation or by Municipality for Highway Purposes—Issue of General or Special Benefit. (5/2017)
835.13	Eminent Domain—Issue of Just Compensation—Partial Taking by Department of Transportation or by Municipality for Highway Purposes (“Map Act”). (4/2019)
835.13A	Eminent Domain—Just Compensation—Partial Taking by Department of Transportation or by Municipality for Highway Purposes (“Map Act”) – Issue of General or Special Benefit. (5/2017)
835.14	Eminent Domain—Issue of Just Compensation—Taking of an Easement by Department of Transportation or by Municipality for Highway Purposes. (4/2019)
835.14A	Eminent Domain—Just Compensation—Taking of an Easement by Department of Transportation or by Municipality for Highway Purposes—Issue of General or Special Benefit. (5/2017)
835.15	Eminent Domain—Issue of Just Compensation—Total Taking by Private or Local Public Condemnors. (5/2006)
835.15A	Eminent Domain—Issue of Just Compensation—Taking of a Temporary Construction or Drainage Easement by Department of Transportation or by Municipality for Highway Purposes. (2/2020)
835.20	Eminent Domain—Issue of Just Compensation—Partial Taking by Private or Local Public Condemnors—Fair Market Value of Property Taken. (5/2006)
835.20A	Eminent Domain—Issue of Just Compensation—Taking of an Easement by Private or Local Public Condemnors—Fair Market Value of Property Taken. (5/2006)
835.22	Eminent Domain—Issue of Just Compensation—Partial Taking by Private or Local Public Condemnors—Fair Market Value of Property Before and After the Taking. (5/2006)
835.22A	Eminent Domain—Issue of Just Compensation—Taking of an Easement by Private or Local Public Condemnors—Fair Market Value of Property Before and After the Taking. (5/2006)
835.24	Eminent Domain—Issue of Just Compensation—Partial Taking by Private or Local Public Condemnors—Greater of the Fair Market Value of Property Taken or the Difference in Fair Market Value of the Property Before and After the Taking. (5/2006)
835.24A	Eminent Domain—Issue of Just Compensation—Taking of an Easement by Private or Local Public Condemnors—Greater of the Fair Market Value of Property Taken or the Difference in Fair Market Value of the Property Before and After the Taking. (5/2006)
835.30	Eminent Domain—Comparables. (Delete Sheet). (5/1999)

Chapter 6. Easements.

- 840.00 Easement—General Definition. (Delete Sheet). (2/2000)
- 840.10 Easement by Prescription. (4/2019)
- 840.15 Easement by Plat. (10/2023)
- 840.20 Implied Easement—Use of Predecessor Common Owner. (5/2022)
- 840.25 Implied Easement—Way of Necessity. (6/2015)
- 840.30 Cartway Proceeding. N.C. Gen Stat. § 136-69 (6/2015)
- 840.31 Cartway Proceeding—Compensation. (5/2000)
- 840.40 Easement—Reasonableness of Scope Equipment. (5/2022)

Chapter 7. Summary Ejectment and Rent Abatement.

- 845.00 Summary Ejectment—Violation of a Provision in the Lease. (4/2017)
- 845.04 Summary Ejectment—Defense of Tender. (2/1993)
- 845.05 Summary Ejectment—Failure to Pay Rent. (2/1993)
- 845.10 Summary Ejectment—Holding Over After the End of the Lease Period. (2/1993)
- 845.15 Summary Ejectment—Defense of Waiver of Breach by Acceptance of Rent. (12/1992)
- 845.20 Summary Ejectment—Damages. (1/2023)
- 845.30 Landlord’s Responsibility to Provide Fit Residential Premises. (2/1993)
- 845.35 Landlord’s Responsibility to Provide Fit Residential Premises—Issue of Damages. (1/2000)

Chapter 8. Land-Disturbing Activity.

- 847.00 Land-Disturbing Activity—Sedimentation Pollution Control Act of 1973—Violation of Act—Violation of Ordinance, Rule or Order of Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources or of Local Government. (6/2008)
- 847.01 Land-Disturbing Activity—Sedimentation Pollution Control Act of 1973—Violation of Act—Violation of Ordinance, Rule or Order of Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources or of Local Government—Damages. (6/2008)

PART VII. DEEDS, WILLS, AND TRUSTS

Chapter 1. Deeds.

- 850.00 Deeds—Action to Establish Validity—Requirements. (8/2004)
- 850.05 Deeds—Action to Set Aside—Lack of Mental Capacity. (5/2002)
- 850.10 Deeds—Action to Set Aside—Mutual Mistake of Fact. (2/2022)
- 850.15 Deeds—Action to Set Aside—Undue Influence. (5/2002)
- 850.20 Deeds—Action to Set Aside—Duress. (5/2002)
- 850.25 Deeds—Action to Set Aside—Fraud. (1/2022)
- 850.30 Deeds—Action to Set Aside—Grossly Inadequate Consideration (“Intrinsic Fraud”). (5/2002)
- 850.35 Deeds—Action to Set Aside—Constructive Fraud. (5/2002)
- 850.40 Deeds—Action to Set Aside—Constructive Fraud—Rebuttal by Proof of Openness, Fairness and Honesty. (5/2002)
- 850.45 Deeds—Action to Set Aside—Defense of Innocent Purchaser. (5/2020)
- 850.50 Deeds—Action to Set Aside—Lack of Valid Delivery. (8/2004)
- 850.55 Deeds—Action to Set Aside—Lack of Legally Adequate Acceptance. (5/2001)

Chapter 1A. Foreclosure Actions.

- 855.10 Foreclosure—Action for Deficiency Judgment—Amount of Debt Owed (4/2016)

- 855.12 Foreclosure—Action for Deficiency Judgment—Defense of Mortgagor to Defeat and Offset Deficiency Judgment—Property Fairly Worth Amount Owed (4/2016)
- 855.14 Foreclosure—Action for Deficiency Judgment—Defense of Mortgagor to Defeat and Offset Deficiency Judgment—Bid Substantially Less than True Value of Property on Date of Foreclosure (4/2016)
- 855.16 Foreclosure—Action for Deficiency Judgment—Defense of Mortgagor to Defeat and Offset Deficiency Judgment—True Value of Property on Date of Foreclosure Sale (3/2016)
- 855.18 Foreclosure—Action for Deficiency Judgment—Sample Verdict Form & Judge’s Worksheet (6/2014)

Chapter 2. Wills.

- 860.00 Wills—Introductory Statement by Court. (Optional). (5/2006)
- 860.05 Wills—Attested Written Will—Requirements. (4/2017)
- 860.10 Wills—Holographic Wills—Requirements. (5/2019)
- 860.15 Wills—Issue of Lack of Testamentary Capacity. (4/2017)
- 860.16 Wills—Issue of Lack of Testamentary Capacity—Evidence of Suicide. (Delete Sheet). (5/2001)
- 860.20 Wills—Issue of Undue Influence. (2/2022)
- 860.22 Wills—Issue of Duress. (5/2002)
- 860.25 Wills—Devisavit Vel Non. (5/2001)

Chapter 3. Parol Trusts.

- 865.50 Parol Trusts—Express Trust in Purchased Real or Personal Property. (5/2001)
- 865.55 Parol Trusts—Express Trust in Transferred Real or Personal Property. (8/2004)
- 865.60 Parol Trusts—Express Declaration of Trust in Personal Property. (5/2001)
- 865.65 Trusts by Operation of Law—Purchase Money Resulting Trust (Real or Personal Property). (6/2014)
- 865.70 Trusts by Operation of Law—Resulting Trust Where Purchase Made with Fiduciary Funds. (6/2014)
- 865.75 Trusts by Operation of Law—Constructive Trust. (6/2015)

PART VIII. INSURANCE

Chapter 1. Liability for Agent for Failure to Procure Insurance.

- 870.00 Failure to Procure Insurance—Negligence Issue. (6/2013)
- 870.10 Failure to Procure Insurance—Breach of Contract Issue. (2/2005)

Chapter 2. Accident, Accidental Means, and Suicide.

- 870.20 Accidental Means Definition. (5/2005)
- 870.21 “Accident” or “Accidental Means” Issue—Effect of Diseased Condition. (5/2005)
- 870.25 Accident Issue—Insurance. (2/2005)
- 870.30 General Risk Life Insurance Policy—Suicide as a Defense. (3/2005)
- 870.72 Identity Theft—Identifying Information. (6/2010)
- 870.73 Identity Theft—Identifying/Personal Information. (6/2010)

Chapter 3. Disability.

- 880.00 Disability—Continuous and Total Disability Issue. (3/2005)
- 880.01 Disability—Continuous Confinement Within Doors Issue. (3/2005)
- 880.02 Disability—Constant Care of a Licensed Physician Issue. (3/2005)

Chapter 4. Material Misrepresentations.

- 880.14 Misrepresentation in Application for Insurance—Factual Dispute. (5/2005)
- 880.15 Misrepresentation in Application for Insurance—Issue of Falsity of Representation. (5/2005)
- 880.20 Materiality of Misrepresentation in Application for Insurance. (5/2006)
- 880.25 Fire Insurance Policy—Willful Misrepresentation in Application. (5/2005)
- 880.26 Concealment in Application for Non-Marine Insurance. (5/2005)
- 880.30 Misrepresentation in Application—False Answer(s) Inserted by Agent. (Estoppel). (5/2006)

Chapter 5. Deleted (5/2023)

Chapter 6. Fire Insurance.

- 910.20 Fire Insurance—Hazard Increased by Insured. (5/2006)
- 910.25 Fire Insurance—Intentional Burning by Insured. (5/2006)
- 910.26 Fire Insurance Policy—Willful Misrepresentation in Application. (5/2006)
- 910.27 Fire Insurance—Defense of Fraudulent Proof of Loss. (5/2006)

Chapter 7. Damages.

- 910.80 Insurance—Damages for Personal Property—Actual Cash Value. (6/1983)
- 910.90 Insurance—Damages for Real Property—Actual Cash Value. (6/1983)

APPENDICES.

- A. TABLE OF SECTIONS OF GENERAL STATUTES INVOLVED IN CIVIL INSTRUCTIONS. (6/1985)
- B. DESCRIPTIVE WORD INDEX. (6/2022)

102.20 PROXIMATE CAUSE—PECULIAR SUSCEPTIBILITY.

In deciding whether the [injury¹ to the plaintiff] [death of the decedent] was a reasonably foreseeable consequence of the defendant's negligence, you must determine whether such negligent conduct, under the same or similar circumstances, could reasonably have been expected to [injure] [cause the death of] a person of ordinary [physical] [mental] condition.² If so, the harmful consequences resulting from the defendant's negligence would be reasonably foreseeable and, therefore, would be a proximate cause of the [plaintiff's injury] [decedent's death]. Otherwise, the harmful consequences resulting from the defendant's negligence would not be reasonably foreseeable and, therefore, would not be a proximate cause of the [plaintiff's injury] [decedent's death].

NOTE WELL: Use the below parenthetical language when prior knowledge of susceptibility to injury is at issue.

(Furthermore, even if a person of ordinary [physical] [mental] condition would not be reasonably expected to [be injured] [die], you must determine whether the defendant had knowledge or a reason to know of the plaintiff's peculiar or abnormal [physical] [mental] condition.³ If so, the harmful consequences resulting from the defendant's negligence would be reasonably foreseeable and, therefore, would be a proximate cause of the [plaintiff's injury] [decedent's death]. Under such circumstance(s), the defendant would be liable for all the harmful consequences which occur, even though these harmful consequences may be unusually extensive because of the peculiar or abnormal [physical] [mental] condition which [happens] [happened] to be present in the [plaintiff] [decedent].⁴

N.C.P.I.—Civil 102.20
PROXIMATE CAUSE—PECULIAR SUSCEPTIBILITY.
GENERAL CIVIL VOLUME
REPLACEMENT FEBRUARY 2024

On the other hand, if you determine that the defendant did not have knowledge or a reason to know of the plaintiff's peculiar or abnormal [physical] [mental] condition, the harmful consequences resulting from the defendant's negligence would not be reasonably foreseeable and, therefore, would not be a proximate cause of the [plaintiff's injury] [decedent's death].)

1. "Injury" includes all legally recognized forms of personal harm, including activation or reactivation of a disease or aggravation of an existing condition. See N.C.P.I.- Civil 102.22 (Proximate Cause – Activation/Aggravation).

2. *Hughes v. Webster*, 175 N.C. App. 726, 625 S.E.2d 177 (2006); *Potts v. Howser*, 274 N.C. 49, 53-54, 161 S.E.2d 737, 741 (1968); *Lockwood v. McCaskill*, 262 N.C. 663, 670, 138 S.E.2d 541, 546 (1964); *Wyatt v. Gilmore*, 57 N.C. App. 57, 59-60, 290 S.E.2d 790, 791-92 (1982); *Lee v. Regan*, 47 N.C. App. 544, 550, 267 S.E.2d 909, 912, *cert. denied*, 301 N.C. 92, 273 S.E.2d 299 (1980); *Hinson v. Sparrow*, 25 N.C. App. 571, 573-74, 214 S.E.2d 198, 199-200 (1975); *Redding v. F. W. Woolworth Co.*, 9 N.C. App. 406, 409-10, 176 S.E.2d 383, 385 (1970).

3. The Court of Appeals described the impact of prior knowledge of susceptibility on the foreseeability standard as follows:

Negligence is the failure to use due care under the circumstances. One of the circumstances in a particular case might be the known susceptibility to injury of a person to whom the duty of due care is owed. Obviously, in the exercise of due care one may not act toward a frail old lady in the same way one could act toward a robust young man. The duty owed, to exercise due care, is the same in each instance, but in fulfilling that duty the difference in circumstances requires a difference in conduct by the actor.

Hinson, 25 N.C. App. at 574, 214 S.E. 2d at 200. In such cases, the following supplement to the above charge may be used: "A negligent person is held responsible for knowing of the peculiar condition when, under the circumstances, [he] [she] should have known or anticipated it."

4. *Potts v. Howser*, 274 N.C. 49, 54, 161 S.E.2d 737, 742 (1968).

102.22 PROXIMATE CAUSE—ACTIVATION/AGGRAVATION.

The defendant is not liable for damages attributable solely to the pre-existing [physical] [mental] condition of the plaintiff.¹ Instead, the defendant is liable only to the extent that the defendant's wrongful act proximately and naturally [aggravated] [activated] the plaintiff's pre-existing [physical] [mental] condition.²

[When the result of the defendant's negligence is to activate a [physical] [mental] condition of the plaintiff [that was dormant] [to which the plaintiff is predisposed], the defendant is liable for the entire damages which result from the [[physical] [mental]] [[dormant] [pre-disposed]] condition becoming active.]³

[When the defendant's negligence does not cause a [physical] [mental] condition of the plaintiff, but only aggravates and increases the severity of a condition existing at the time of the plaintiff's injury, the plaintiff's recovery in damages is limited to the additional injury caused by the aggravation over and above the consequences, which the pre-existing [physical] [mental] condition, running its normal course, would itself have caused if there had been no aggravation by the defendant.]⁴

1. *Potts v. Howser*, 274 N.C. 49, 54, 161 S.E.2d 737, 742 (1968).

2. *Potts v. Howser*, 274 N.C. 49, 54, 161 S.E.2d 737, 742 (1968).

3. *Potts v. Howser*, 274 N.C. 49, 54, 161 S.E.2d 737, 742 (1968).

4. *Potts v. Howser*, 274 N.C. 49, 54, 161 S.E.2d 737, 742 (1968).

103.30 AGENCY ISSUE—CIVIL CONSPIRACY (ONE DEFENDANT).¹

NOTE WELL: This instruction is to be used only where civil conspiracy is alleged² to associate the defendant with others³ for the purpose of establishing joint and several liability. There is no independent claim for civil conspiracy alone.⁴ To create joint and several liability by reason of conspiracy, there must be injury or damage caused by an overt or wrongful act,⁵ done by a conspirator, pursuant to the common scheme and in furtherance of the conspiracy.⁶

The *(state number)* issue reads: “Did *(name defendant)* conspire with *(name all alleged co-conspirators)* or any one or more of them to *(state object(s) of conspiracy)?*”

[You will answer this issue only if you have answered the *(state number)* issue “Yes” in favor of the plaintiff.]⁷

NOTE WELL: Select one bracketed paragraph depending on whether the defendant conspired to do an unlawful act, or conspired to do a lawful act in an unlawful way.

[The plaintiff contends, and the defendant denies, that the defendant and *(name all alleged co-conspirators)* conspired to do an unlawful act, that is *(state claim)*. I instruct you, members of the jury, that *(state claim)* is an unlawful act. Thus, if you have answered the *(state number)* issue “Yes” in favor of the plaintiff, you must consider whether the defendant conspired with the *(name all alleged co-conspirators)* or any one or more of them to *(state claim)*.]

[The plaintiff contends, and the defendant denies, that the defendant and *(name all alleged co-conspirators)* conspired to do a lawful act in an unlawful way. An act, while lawful in and of itself, may be done with an intent or purpose which makes it unlawful.⁸ I instruct you, members of the jury, that *(state act or acts)* [is] [are] not, in and of [itself] [themselves], unlawful. However, if *(state act or acts)* [was] [were] done with the purpose or intent⁹

to (*state object of offense*), then while the act(s) may be lawful in and of [itself] [themselves], this purpose or intent would make [it] [them] unlawful.¹⁰ Thus, if you have answered the (*state number*) issue “Yes” in favor of the plaintiff, you must consider whether the defendant conspired with (*name all alleged co-conspirators*) or any one or more of them to (*state act or acts*) with the purpose or intent to (*state object of offense*).]

On this issue the plaintiff has the burden of proof. This means that the plaintiff must prove, by the greater weight of the evidence,¹¹ the following [two] [three] things:

First, that (*name all alleged co-conspirators*) or any one or more of them agreed with (*name defendant*) [to do an unlawful act] [to do a lawful act in an unlawful way], [and]

Second, that one or more of the parties to the agreement committed an overt act in furtherance of the aims of the agreement¹²

NOTE WELL: If the issue of whether a defendant has committed a wrongful act has previously been determined, then the third element, as to proximate cause, need not be given. If the issue of whether a defendant has committed a wrongful act has not previously been given, then the jury would be instructed on the third element, as bracketed below.

[And third, that the act(s) committed in furtherance of the aims of the agreement proximately caused [injury] [damage] to the plaintiff.¹³]

I will now explain each of these requirements.

First, the plaintiff must prove that (*name all alleged co-conspirators*) or any one or more of them agreed with (*name defendant*) to do [an unlawful act] [a lawful act in an unlawful way]. Such an agreement is called a conspiracy. A conspiracy is a combination of two or more persons to accomplish some unlawful purpose or to accomplish some lawful purpose by unlawful means. There can be no conspiracy unless more than one person is

involved. The very word “conspiracy” means “together with someone else.” In other words, a conspiracy is a kind of partnership or joint enterprise in which each member becomes the agent of every other member with respect to the common plan, and each member is held responsible for the acts of or statements made by any other member made or done in furtherance of the common plan.¹⁴ The essence of a conspiracy is an unlawful combination to violate or to disregard the law.¹⁵

[And] Second, the plaintiff must prove that one or more of the parties to the agreement committed an overt act in furtherance of the aims of the agreement. An overt act is an act which could be neutral in its character, but which is evidence of affirmative action showing an intent to accomplish or further the objects of the alleged conspiracy. It is not necessary for the plaintiff to prove that all or any one of the aims of the agreement was accomplished.¹⁶ The plaintiff must show, however, that one or more of the parties to the agreement performed at least one act in furtherance of the agreement.

[And Third, the plaintiff must prove that the overt act(s) committed in furtherance of the conspiracy [was] [were] a proximate cause of [injury] [damage] to the plaintiff.

A proximate cause is a real cause—a cause without which the claimed [injury] [damage] would not have occurred, and one which a reasonably careful and prudent person could foresee would probably produce such [injury] [damage] or some similar injurious result.]

There may be more than one proximate cause of [an injury] [damage]. Therefore, the party seeking damages need not prove that the overt act(s) [was] [were] the sole proximate cause of the [injury] [damage]. The plaintiff must prove, by the greater weight of the evidence, only that the overt act(s) [was] [were] a proximate cause.

N.C.P.I.—Civil 103.30
AGENCY ISSUE—CIVIL CONSPIRACY (ONE DEFENDANT).
GENERAL CIVIL VOLUME
REPLACEMENT MAY 2024

Finally, with respect to this issue, on which the plaintiff has the burden of proof, if you find, by the greater weight of the evidence, that the defendant agreed with (*name all alleged co-conspirators*) or any one of them to do [an unlawful act] [a lawful act in an unlawful way], and that one or more of the parties to the agreement then committed [an] overt act(s) in furtherance of the aims of the agreement, [and that such overt act(s) proximately caused [injury] [damage] to the plaintiff], then it would be your duty to answer this issue “Yes” in favor of the plaintiff.

If, on the other hand, you fail to so find, then it would be your duty to answer this issue “No” in favor of the defendant.

1. Where there are multiple defendants, the fact of conspiracy between any alleged co-conspirator and each defendant should be determined separately. Thus, there should be an issue submitted as to each defendant's conspiracy with another. See N.C.P.I.—Civil 103.31 (Agency Issue-Civil Conspiracy) (Multiple Defendants).

2. In many instances, conspiracy is not pleaded from the outset. The basis for a conspiracy may develop as facts are revealed at trial. In such event and provided there is no timely objection, the pleadings may be deemed amended to conform to the evidence. N.C.G.S. § 1A-1, Rule 15(b).

3. Conspiracy may exist between parties or between a party and a non-party. All that is required is that one member of the conspiracy be a party to the action. *Burton v. Dixon*, 259 N.C. 473, 477, 131 S.E.2d 27, 30 (1963).

4. “Accurately speaking, there is no such thing as a civil action for conspiracy.” *Reid v. Holden*, 242 N.C. 408, 414, 88 S.E.2d 125, 130 (1995). A cause of action for civil conspiracy “does no more than associate the defendants together and perhaps liberalize the rules of evidence to the extent that under proper circumstances the acts of one may be admissible against all.” *Henry v. Deen*, 310 N.C. 75, 87, 310 S.E.2d 326, 334 (1984).

5. The terms “overt act” and “wrongful act” are used interchangeably. *Compare Reid v. Holden*, 242 N.C. 408, 415, 88 S.E.2d 125, 130 (1995) (“To create civil liability for conspiracy there must have been an overt act . . .”), with *Holt v. Holt*, 232 N.C. 497, 500, 61 S.E.2d 448, 451 (1950) (“To create civil liability for conspiracy, a wrongful act resulting in injury . . . must be done . . .”).

6. “A civil action for conspiracy is an action for damages resulting from acts committed by one or more of the conspirators pursuant to the formed conspiracy, rather than the conspiracy itself.” *Burton v. Dixon*, 259 N.C. 473, 476, 131 S.E.2d 27, 30 (1963). Damages for which recovery may be sought are limited to those proximately caused by specific overt or wrongful acts done “as a part of and in furtherance of the common object.” See *Muse v. Morrison*, 234 N.C. 195, 198, 66 S.E.2d 783, 785 (1951) (damages must be those resulting from “acts so done”).

N.C.P.I.—Civil 103.30
AGENCY ISSUE—CIVIL CONSPIRACY (ONE DEFENDANT).
GENERAL CIVIL VOLUME
REPLACEMENT MAY 2024

7. If the issue of whether a defendant has committed a wrongful act has been earlier submitted to the jury, then this language would be inserted into the instruction.

8. "A criminal conspiracy is an agreement between two or more persons to do an unlawful act or to do a lawful act by unlawful means." *State v. Valentine*, 357 N.C. 512, 522, 591 S.E.2d 846, 855 (2003) (quoting *State v. Lamb*, 342 N.C. 151, 155, 463 S.E.2d 189, 191 (1995)). Stated simply, "[t]he plan may make the parts unlawful." *Swift & Co. v. United States*, 196 U.S. 375, 396 (1904).

9. For an instruction on intent, see N.C.P.I.—Civil 101.46 (Definition of [Intent] [Intentionally]).

10. This charge would typically be used where intentional torts are alleged. An example might be the tort of abuse of process as presented in *Chatham Estates v. American National Bank*, 171 N.C. 579, 88 S.E. 783 (1916). In that case (which did not involve conspiracy issues), the plaintiff claimed that defendant had abused legal process by bringing an action and filing a *lis pendens* notice on his property. While the act of filing a notice of *lis pendens* is lawful, if done "for the purpose of injuring and destroying the credit and business of another . . .", it is an offense. *Id.*, 171 N.C. at 582, 88 S.E. at 784; accord *Whyburn v. Norwood*, 47 N.C. App. 310, 267 S.E.2d 374 (1980). In instructing the jury where a conspiracy issue is present, the court might say:

I instruct you, members of the jury, that the filing of a notice of *lis pendens* is not, in and of itself, unlawful. However, if the filing of the notice of *lis pendens* was done with the purpose or intent to injure and destroy the credit and business of another, while the act may be lawful in and of itself, this purpose or intent will make it unlawful.

11. In cases where there is an evidentiary basis for a conspiracy, certain rules of evidence are brought into play, most notably the hearsay exception set forth at N.C.G.S. § 8C-1, Rule 801(d)(E).

12. *Evans v. GMC Sales, Inc.*, 268 N.C. 544, 546, 151 S.E.2d 69, 71 (1966); *Curry v. Staley*, 6 N.C. App. 165, 167, 169 S.E.2d 522, 523 (1969). *Cf. McNeil v. Hall*, 220 N.C. 73, 74, 16 S.E.2d 456, 457 (1941) (If the acts complained of are not wrongful or illegal, then absent any intimidation or coercion, no agreement to commit the lawful acts can be called an illegal and wrongful conspiracy.).

13. *Coleman v. Shirlen*, 53 N.C. App. 573, 577, 281 S.E.2d 431, 433 (1981) (abrogated on other grounds).

14. *Henry v. Deen*, 310 N.C. 75, 87, 310 S.E.2d 316, 334 (1984) (The complainant must not only show conspiracy, but that injury resulted as well.); *Holt v. Holt*, 232 N.C. 497, 61 S.E.2d 448 (1950). See also *State v. Lee*, 277 N.C. 205, 208, 176 S.E.2d 765, 770 (1970).

15. "If two or more persons conspire or agree to engage in an unlawful enterprise, each is liable for acts committed by any of them in furtherance of the common design and the manner or means used in executing the common design; the fact that one conspirator is the instigator and dominant actor is immaterial on the question of guilt of the other." *Newton v. Barth*, 284 N.C. App. 331, 343 788 S.E. 653, 663 (2016) (quoting *Curry v. Staley*, 6 N.C. App. 165, 169, 169 S.E.2d 522, 524 (1969)).

In appropriate cases, the instruction may be supplemented as follows:

The basis of a conspiracy is an agreement or understanding between two or more persons. An agreement or understanding between two or more persons exists when they share a commitment to a common scheme. To establish the existence of a conspiracy, the evidence need not show that its members

entered into any formal or written agreement. The agreement itself may have been entirely unspoken. A person can become a member without full knowledge of all of the details of the conspiracy, the identity of all of its members, or the parts such members played in the charged conspiracy. The members of the conspiracy need not necessarily have met together, directly stated what their object or purpose was to one another, or stated the details or the means by which they would accomplish their purpose. To prove a conspiracy existed, the evidence must show that the alleged members of the conspiracy came to an agreement or understanding among themselves to accomplish a common purpose.

A conspiracy may be formed without all parties coming to an agreement at the same time [such as *where competitors separately accept invitations to participate in a plan to restrain trade*]. Similarly, it is not essential that all persons acted exactly alike, nor is it necessary that they all possessed the same motive for entering the agreement. It is also not necessary that all of the means or methods claimed by plaintiff were agreed upon to carry out the alleged conspiracy, nor that all of the means or methods that were agreed upon were actually used or put into operation, nor that all the persons alleged to be members of the conspiracy were actually members. It is the agreement or understanding to restrain trade [*in the way alleged by plaintiff*] that constitutes a conspiracy. Therefore, you may find a conspiracy existed regardless of whether it succeeded or failed.

Plaintiff may prove the existence of the alleged conspiracy through direct evidence, circumstantial evidence, or both. Direct evidence is explicit and requires no inferences to establish the existence of the alleged conspiracy.

Direct evidence of an agreement may not be available, and therefore a conspiracy also may be shown through circumstantial evidence. You may infer the existence of a conspiracy from the circumstances, including what you find the alleged members actually did and the words they used. Mere similarity of conduct among various persons, however, or the fact that they may have associated with one another and may have met or assembled together, does not by itself establish the existence of a conspiracy. If they acted similarly but independently of one another, without any agreement among them, then there would not be a conspiracy.

In determining whether an agreement or understanding between two or more persons has been proved, you must view the evidence as a whole and not piecemeal.

Id.

16. See *State v. Potter*, 252 N.C. 312, 313, 113 S.E.2d 573, 574 (1960).

N.C.P.I.—Civil 103.31
AGENCY ISSUE—CIVIL CONSPIRACY (MULTIPLE DEFENDANTS).
GENERAL CIVIL VOLUME
REPLACEMENT MAY 2024

103.31 AGENCY ISSUE—CIVIL CONSPIRACY (MULTIPLE DEFENDANTS).

NOTE WELL: This instruction is to be used only where civil conspiracy is alleged¹ to associate defendants together or with others² for the purpose of establishing joint and several liability. There is no independent claim for civil conspiracy alone.³ To create joint and several liability by reason of conspiracy, there must be injury or damage caused by an overt or wrongful act,⁴ done by a conspirator, pursuant to the common scheme and in furtherance of the conspiracy.⁵

[In this case, members of the jury, the plaintiff contends, and each defendant denies, that (*name each defendant*) [both] [all] conspired with (*name all alleged co-conspirators*) or any one or more of them to do [an unlawful act] [a lawful act in an unlawful way.]]

The existence or non-existence of a conspiracy must be determined separately for each defendant pursuant to the instructions I am about to give you. The mere fact that one of a group of defendants conspires with someone else does not necessarily mean that the remainder of those defendants have also conspired. Each defendant is entitled to have the issue of whether that defendant did or did not in fact conspire with another be determined separately.

I instruct you that you will consider each of the following issues:

"Did (*name first defendant*) conspire with (*name all alleged co-conspirators*) or any one or more of them to (*state object(s) of conspiracy*)?"

"Did (*name second defendant*) conspire with (*name all alleged co-conspirators*) or any one or more of them to (*state object(s) of conspiracy*)?"

(Add identical issues for each remaining defendant).

[You will answer this issue only if you have answered (*state number*) issue "Yes" in favor of the plaintiff.]⁶

N.C.P.I.—Civil 103.31
AGENCY ISSUE—CIVIL CONSPIRACY (MULTIPLE DEFENDANTS).
GENERAL CIVIL VOLUME
REPLACEMENT MAY 2024

NOTE WELL: Select one bracketed paragraph depending on whether the defendant conspired to do an unlawful act, or conspired to do a lawful act in an unlawful way.

[The plaintiff contends, and the defendants deny, that each defendant and (*name all alleged co-conspirators*) conspired to do an unlawful act, that is (*state claim*). I instruct you, members of the jury, that (*state claim*) is an unlawful act. Thus, if you have answered the (*state number*) issue “Yes” in favor of the plaintiff, then, as to each defendant you must consider whether the (*name all alleged co-conspirators*) or any one or more of them conspired to (*state claim*).]

[The plaintiff contends, and the defendants deny, that each defendant and (*name all alleged co-conspirators*) conspired to do a lawful act in an unlawful way. An act, while lawful in and of itself, may be done with an intent or purpose which makes it unlawful.⁷ I instruct you, members of the jury, that (*state act or acts*) [is] [are] not, in and of [itself] [themselves], unlawful. However, if (*state act or acts*) [was] [were] done with the purpose or intent⁸ to (*state object of offense*), then while the act(s) may be lawful in and of [itself] [themselves], this purpose or intent would make [it] [them] unlawful.⁹ Thus, if you have answered the (*state number*) issue “Yes” in favor of the plaintiff, then, as to each defendant, you must consider whether the (*name all alleged co-conspirators*) or any one or more of them conspired to (*state act or acts*) with the purpose or intent to (*state object of offense*).]

On this issue the plaintiff has the burden of proof. This means that the plaintiff must prove, by the greater weight of the evidence,¹⁰ the following [two] [three] things:

First, that the defendant you are considering agreed with (*name all alleged co-conspirators*) or any one or more of them [to do an unlawful act] [to do a lawful act in an unlawful way], [and]

Second, that one or more of the parties to the agreement then committed an overt act in furtherance of the aims of the agreement¹¹

NOTE WELL: If the issue of whether a defendant has committed a wrongful act has previously been determined, then the third element, as to proximate cause, need not be given. If the issue of whether a defendant has committed a wrongful act has not previously been given, then the jury would be instructed on the third element, as bracketed below.

[And third, that the act(s) committed in furtherance of the aims of the agreement proximately caused [injury] [damage] to the plaintiff.]¹²

I will now explain each of these requirements.

First, the plaintiff must prove that the defendant you are considering agreed with (*name all alleged co-conspirators*) or any one or more of them [to do an unlawful act] [to do a lawful act in an unlawful way]. Such an agreement is called a conspiracy. A conspiracy is a combination of two or more persons to accomplish some unlawful purpose or to accomplish some lawful purpose by unlawful means. There can be no conspiracy unless more than one person is involved. The very word “conspiracy” means “together with someone else.” In other words, a conspiracy is a kind of partnership or joint enterprise in which each member becomes the agent of every other member with respect to the common plan, and each member is held responsible for the acts of or statements made by any other member made or done in furtherance of the common plan.¹³ The essence of a conspiracy is an unlawful combination to violate or to disregard the law.¹⁴

[And] Second, the plaintiff must prove that one or more of the parties to the agreement committed an overt act in furtherance of the aims of the agreement. An overt act is an act which could be neutral in its character, but which is evidence of affirmative action showing an intent to accomplish or further the object(s) of the alleged conspiracy. It is not necessary for the

N.C.P.I.—Civil 103.31
AGENCY ISSUE—CIVIL CONSPIRACY (MULTIPLE DEFENDANTS).
GENERAL CIVIL VOLUME
REPLACEMENT MAY 2024

plaintiff to prove that all or any one of the aims of the agreement was accomplished.¹⁵ Plaintiff must show, however, that one or more of the parties to the agreement performed at least one act in furtherance of the agreement.

[And] Third, the plaintiff must prove that the overt act(s) committed in furtherance of the conspiracy [was] [were] a proximate cause of [injury] [damage] to the plaintiff.]

Commented [SD1]: I added bracket and capitalization for consistency – unsure if this is what you wanted

A proximate cause is a real cause—a cause without which the claimed [injury] [damage] would not have occurred, and one which a reasonably careful and prudent person could foresee would probably produce such [injury] [damage] or some similar injurious result.

There may be more than one proximate cause of [an injury] [damage]. Therefore, the party seeking damages need not prove that the overt act(s) [was] [were] the sole proximate cause of the [injury] [damage]. The plaintiff must prove, by the greater weight of the evidence, only that the overt act(s) [was] [were] a proximate cause.]

Finally, with respect to this issue, as to (*name first defendant*), on which the plaintiff has the burden of proof, if you find, by the greater weight of the evidence, that (*name first defendant*) agreed with (*name all alleged co-conspirators*) or any one or more of them to do [an unlawful act] [a lawful act in an unlawful way], and that one or more of the parties to the agreement then committed [an] overt act(s) in furtherance of the aims of the agreement, [and that such overt act(s) proximately caused [injury] [damage] to the plaintiff], then it would be your duty to answer this issue “Yes” in favor of the plaintiff.

If, on the other hand, you fail to so find, then it would be your duty to answer this issue “No” in favor of (*name first defendant*).

N.C.P.I.—Civil 103.31
AGENCY ISSUE—CIVIL CONSPIRACY (MULTIPLE DEFENDANTS).
GENERAL CIVIL VOLUME
REPLACEMENT MAY 2024

Likewise, with respect to this issue, as to (*name second defendant*), on which the plaintiff has the burden of proof, if you find, by the greater weight of the evidence, that (*name second defendant*) agreed with (*name all alleged co-conspirators*) or any one or more of them to do [an unlawful act] [a lawful act in an unlawful way], and that one or more of the parties to the agreement then committed [an] overt act(s) in furtherance of the aims of the agreement [and that such overt act(s) proximately caused [injury] [damage] to the plaintiff], then it would be your duty to answer this issue “Yes” in favor of the plaintiff.

If, on the other hand, you fail to so find, then it would be your duty to answer this issue “No” in favor of (*name second defendant*).

(Repeat final mandate for each named defendant).

1. In many instances, conspiracy is not pleaded from the outset. The basis for a conspiracy may develop as facts are revealed at trial. In such event and provided there is no timely objection, the pleadings may be deemed amended to conform to the evidence. N.C.G.S. § 1A-1, Rule 15(b).

2. Conspiracy may exist between parties or between a party and a non-party. All that is required is that one member of the conspiracy be a party to the action. *Burton v. Dixon*, 259 N.C. 473, 477, 131 S.E.2d 27, 30 (1963).

3. “Accurately speaking, there is no such thing as a civil action for conspiracy.” *Reid v. Holden*, 242 N.C. 408, 414, 88 S.E.2d 125, 130 (1955). A cause of action for civil conspiracy “does no more than associate the defendants together and perhaps liberalize the rules of evidence to the extent that under proper circumstances the acts of one may be admissible against all.” *Henry v. Deen*, 310 N.C. 75, 87, 310 S.E.2d 326, 334 (1984).

4. The terms “overt act” and “wrongful act” are used interchangeably. Compare *Reid v. Holden*, 242 N.C. 408, 415, 88 S.E.2d 125, 130 (1955) (“To create civil liability for conspiracy there must have been an overt act . . .”), with *Holt v. Holt*, 232 N.C. 497, 500, 61 S.E.2d 448, 451 (1950) (“To create civil liability for conspiracy, a wrongful act resulting in injury . . . must be done . . .”).

5. “A civil action for conspiracy is an action for damages resulting from acts committed by one or more of the conspirators pursuant to the formed conspiracy, rather than the conspiracy itself.” *Burton v. Dixon*, 259 N.C. 473, 476, 131 S.E.2d 27, 30 (1963). Damages for which recovery may be sought are limited to those proximately caused by specific overt or wrongful acts done “as a part of and in furtherance of the common object.” See *Muse v. Morrison*, 234 N.C. 195, 198, 66 S.E.2d 783, 785 (1951) (damages must be those resulting from “acts so done”).

6. If the issue of whether a defendant has committed a wrongful act has been earlier submitted to the jury, then this language would be inserted into the instruction.

N.C.P.I.—Civil 103.31
AGENCY ISSUE—CIVIL CONSPIRACY (MULTIPLE DEFENDANTS).
GENERAL CIVIL VOLUME
REPLACEMENT MAY 2024

7. "A criminal conspiracy is an agreement between two or more persons to do an unlawful act or to do a lawful act by unlawful means." *State v. Valentine*, 357 N.C. 512, 522, 591 S.E.2d 846, 855 (2003) (quoting *State v. Lamb*, 342 N.C. 151, 155, 463 S.E.2d 189, 191 (1995)). Stated simply, "[t]he plan may make the parts unlawful." *Swift & Co. v. United States*, 196 U.S. 375, 396 (1904).

8. For an instruction on intent, see N.C.P.I.—Civil 101.46 (Definition of [Intent] [Intentionally]).

9. This charge would typically be used where intentional torts are alleged. An example might be the tort of abuse of process as presented in *Chatham Estates v. American National Bank*, 171 N.C. 579, 88 S.E. 783 (1916). In that case (which did not involve conspiracy issues), the plaintiff claimed that defendant had abused legal process by bringing an action and filing a *lis pendens* notice on his property. While the act of filing a notice of *lis pendens* is lawful, if done "for the purpose of injuring and destroying the credit and business of another . . .", it is an offense. *Id.*, 171 N.C. at 582, 88 S.E. at 784; accord, *Whyburn v. Norwood*, 47 N.C. App. 310, 267 S.E.2d 374 (1980). In instructing the jury where a conspiracy issue is present, the court might say:

I instruct you, members of the jury, that the filing of a notice of *lis pendens* is not, in and of itself, unlawful. However, if the filing of the notice of *lis pendens* was done with the purpose or intent to injure and destroy the credit and business of another, while the act may be lawful in and of itself, this purpose or intent will make it unlawful.

10. In cases where there is an evidentiary basis for a conspiracy, certain rules of evidence are brought into play, most notably the hearsay exception set forth at N.C.G.S. § 8C-1, Rule 801(d)(E).

11. *Evans v. GMC Sales, Inc.*, 268 N.C. 544, 546, 151 S.E.2d 69, 71 (1966); *Curry v. Staley*, 6 N.C. App. 165, 167, 169 S.E.2d 522, 523 (1969). Compare, *McNeil v. Hall*, 220 N.C. 73, 74, 16 S.E.2d 456, 457 (1941) (If the acts complained of are not wrongful or illegal, then absent any intimidation or coercion, no agreement to commit the lawful acts can be called an illegal and wrongful conspiracy.).

12. *Coleman v. Shirlen*, 53 N.C. App. 573, 577, 281 S.E.2d 431, 433 (1981) (abrogated by statute on other grounds).

13. *Henry v. Deen*, 310 N.C. 75, 87, 310 S.E.2d 326, 334 (1984) (The complainant must not only show conspiracy, but that injury occurred as well.); *Holt v. Holt*, 232 N.C. 497, 61 S.E.2d 448 (1950); see also *State v. Lee*, 277 N.C. 205, 208, 176 S.E.2d 765, 770 (1970).

14. "If two or more persons conspire or agree to engage in an unlawful enterprise, each is liable for acts committed by any of them in furtherance of the common design and the manner or means used in executing the common design; the fact that one conspirator is the instigator and dominant actor is immaterial on the question of guilt of the other." *Newton v. Barth*, 284 N.C. App. 331, 343 788 S.E. 653, 663 (2016) (quoting *Curry v. Staley*, 6 N.C. App. 165, 169, 169 S.E.2d 522, 524 (1969)).

In appropriate cases, the instruction may be supplemented as follows:

The basis of a conspiracy is an agreement or understanding between two or more persons. An agreement or understanding between two or more persons exists when they share a commitment to a common scheme. To establish the existence of a conspiracy, the evidence need not show that its members entered into any formal or written agreement. The agreement itself may have been entirely unspoken. A person can become a member without full knowledge

N.C.P.I.—Civil 103.31
AGENCY ISSUE—CIVIL CONSPIRACY (MULTIPLE DEFENDANTS).
GENERAL CIVIL VOLUME
REPLACEMENT MAY 2024

of all of the details of the conspiracy, the identity of all of its members, or the parts such members played in the charged conspiracy. The members of the conspiracy need not necessarily have met together, directly stated what their object or purpose was to one another, or stated the details or the means by which they would accomplish their purpose. To prove a conspiracy existed, the evidence must show that the alleged members of the conspiracy came to an agreement or understanding among themselves to accomplish a common purpose.

A conspiracy may be formed without all parties coming to an agreement at the same time [*such as where competitors separately accept invitations to participate in a plan to restrain trade*]. Similarly, it is not essential that all persons acted exactly alike, nor is it necessary that they all possessed the same motive for entering the agreement. It is also not necessary that all of the means or methods claimed by plaintiff were agreed upon to carry out the alleged conspiracy, nor that all of the means or methods that were agreed upon were actually used or put into operation, nor that all the persons alleged to be members of the conspiracy were actually members. It is the agreement or understanding to restrain trade [*in the way alleged by plaintiff*] that constitutes a conspiracy. Therefore, you may find a conspiracy existed regardless of whether it succeeded or failed.

Plaintiff may prove the existence of the alleged conspiracy through direct evidence, circumstantial evidence, or both. Direct evidence is explicit and requires no inferences to establish the existence of the alleged conspiracy.

Direct evidence of an agreement may not be available, and therefore a conspiracy also may be shown through circumstantial evidence. You may infer the existence of a conspiracy from the circumstances, including what you find the alleged members actually did and the words they used. Mere similarity of conduct among various persons, however, or the fact that they may have associated with one another and may have met or assembled together, does not by itself establish the existence of a conspiracy. If they acted similarly but independently of one another, without any agreement among them, then there would not be a conspiracy.

In determining whether an agreement or understanding between two or more persons has been proved, you must view the evidence as a whole and not piecemeal.

Id.

15. See *State v. Potter*, 252 N.C. 312, 313, 113 S.E.2d 573, 574 (1960).

502.00 CONTRACTS—ISSUE OF BREACH.

NOTE WELL: Use this instruction for breach when materiality is not at issue. See N.C.P.I.—Civil 502.12 (Contracts—Issue of Breach—Materiality) for the issue of breach when materiality is at issue.

The *(state number)* issue reads:

“Did the defendant breach the contract?”

(You will answer this issue only if you have answered the *(state number)* issue “Yes” in favor of the plaintiff.)

On this issue the burden of proof is on the plaintiff. This means that the plaintiff must prove, by the greater weight of the evidence, that the defendant failed to [perform] [abide by] a term of the contract.¹

In this case the plaintiff contends, and the defendant denies, that defendant failed to [perform] [abide by] a term of the contract [by] [in one or more of the following ways]:

(Give the plaintiff's contention(s) by identifying each term which the plaintiff alleges has been breached by the defendant.)

Finally, as to the *(state number)* issue on which the plaintiff has the burden of proof, if you find by the greater weight of the evidence that the defendant breached the contract, then it would be your duty to answer this issue “Yes” in favor of the plaintiff.

If, on the other hand, you fail to so find, then it would be your duty to answer this issue “No” in favor of the defendant.

1. *Poor v. Hill*, 138 N.C. App. 19, 29, 530 S.E.2d 838, 845 (2000).

502.03 CONTRACTS—ISSUE OF BREACH BY NON-PERFORMANCE.

The (*state number*) issue reads:

"Did the defendant breach the contract (by non-performance)¹?"

(You will answer this issue only if you have answered the (*state number*) issue "Yes" in favor of the plaintiff.)

On this issue the burden of proof is on the plaintiff. This means that the plaintiff must prove, by the greater weight of the evidence, two things:

First, that the time had come for the defendant to [perform] [abide by] a material term of the contract. This means that, at the time of the alleged breach (*here select as appropriate*):

[the plaintiff and the defendant were to perform their respective obligations at the same time and the plaintiff was ready, willing and able to perform the plaintiff's obligation(s)]²

[there were no conditions precedent to the defendant's obligation to perform]

[each condition precedent to the defendant's obligation to perform was satisfied]

[[the defendant] [defendant's agent] had prevented the plaintiff from performing a condition precedent to the defendant's obligation to perform]³

[A condition precedent is a requirement that some act or event occur or not occur before a party to a contract becomes obligated to perform. A condition precedent may be [written] [oral] [implied from the circumstances]]

[*state any other condition which affects the defendant's obligation to perform as supported by the evidence, e.g., condition subsequent*]⁴]

Second, that the defendant failed to [perform] [abide by] a material term of the contract.⁵ A material term is one that is essential to the transaction, that is, a term which, if omitted or modified, would have caused one of the parties to withhold assent or to bargain for a substantially different term. Not every term in a contract is material. A party's failure to [perform] [abide by] a term that is not material is still a breach of the contract, but a non-material breach does not excuse either party from performance of the remaining terms of the contract.⁶ In determining whether a term is material, you may consider the following factors:

[the subject matter and purpose of the contract]

[the intentions of the parties]

[the scope of performance reasonably expected by each party]

[the prior dealings of the parties]

[any custom, practice or usage so commonly known to other reasonable persons, in similar situations, that the parties knew or should have known of its existence]

[state other factors supported by the evidence].

In this case the plaintiff contends, and the defendant denies, that (*here select as appropriate*):

[the plaintiff was ready, willing and able to perform the plaintiff's obligations]

[there were no conditions precedent to the defendant's obligation to perform]

[[the condition precedent] [each condition precedent] to the defendant's obligation to perform was satisfied] [as follows] [in one or more of the

following ways]: (*Give the plaintiff's contention(s) by identifying each condition which the plaintiff alleges has been satisfied*)).

[[the defendant] [defendant's agent] had prevented the plaintiff from performing a condition precedent to the defendant's obligation to perform] [as follows] [in one or more of the following ways]: (*Give the plaintiff's contention(s) by identifying each condition which the plaintiff alleges has been thwarted*)).

[[the defendant] [defendant's agent] had it within [his] [her] [its] power or control to perform a condition precedent to the defendant's obligation to perform but failed to do so [without reasonable excuse] [in bad faith] [as follows] [in one or more of the following ways]: (*Give the plaintiff's contention(s) by identifying each condition which the plaintiff alleges has been sabotaged*)).

[*state contention regarding satisfaction of any other condition to the defendant's obligation to perform, e.g., condition subsequent*].

The plaintiff further contends, and the defendant denies, that the defendant failed to [perform] [abide by] a material term of the contract [as follows] [in one or more of the following ways]: (*Give the plaintiff's contention(s) by identifying each material term which the plaintiff alleges has been breached*)).

Finally, as to the (*state number*) issue on which the plaintiff has the burden of proof, if you find by the greater weight of the evidence that the time had come for the defendant to [perform] [abide by] a material term of the contract, and that the defendant failed to [perform] [abide by] a material term of the contract, then it would be your duty to answer this issue "Yes" in favor of the plaintiff.

N.C.P.I.—Civil 502.03
CONTRACTS—ISSUE OF BREACH BY NON-PERFORMANCE.
GENERAL CIVIL VOLUME
DECEMBER 2023

If, on the other hand, you fail to so find, then it would be your duty to answer this issue "No" in favor of the defendant.

1. Specify that the basis for breach is non-performance when the jury is also instructed on breach by repudiation (N.C.P.I.—Civil 502.05—Contracts—Issue of Breach by Repudiation) or by prevention (N.C.P.I.—Civil 502.10Contracts—Issue of Breach by Prevention).

2. *Ball v. Maynard*, 184 N.C. App. 99, 106–07, 645 S.E.2d 890, 896 (2007) (quoting *Munchak Corp. v. Caldwell*, 301 N.C. 689, 694, 273 S.E.2d 281, 285 (1981)).

3. *Propst Constr. Co. v. N.C. Dep't of Transp.*, 56 N.C. App. 759, 762, 290 S.E.2d 387, 388–89 (1982) ("The doctrine of prevention is that 'one who prevents the performance of a condition, or makes it impossible by his own act, will not be permitted to take advantage of the nonperformance.'" (quoting *Harwood v. Shoe*, 141 N.C. 161, 163, 53 S.E. 616, 616 (1906))). See also *Cater v. Baker*, 172 N.C. App. 441, 446, 617 S.E.2d 113, 117 (2005) (applying the "doctrine of prevention").

4. *Henderson & Corbin, Inc. v. West Carteret Water Corp., Inc.*, 107 N.C. App. 740, 743–44, 421 S.E.2d 792, 794 (1992) ("[A] 'condition subsequent is any event the existence of which, by agreement of the parties, operates to discharge a duty of performance that has arisen.'" (quoting John D. Calamari & Joseph M. Perillo, *Contracts* § 11–7 (3d ed. 1987))). The existence of a condition subsequent depends upon the intention of the parties in light of the circumstances of the case, the nature of the contract, the relation of the parties, and other admissible evidence that aids the court in determining the intention of the parties. *Harris-Teeter Supermarkets, Inc. v. Hampton*, 76 N.C. App. 649, 652, 334 S.E. 2d 81, 83 (1985). Although conditions subsequent do not require technical words, they must be clearly expressed, as they are not favored in law. *Hinton v. Vinson*, 180 N.C. 393, 397, 104 S.E. 897, 899 (1920); see also *Moore v. Tilley*, 15 N.C. App. 378, 381, 190 S.E.2d 243, 246 (1972) ("[C]onditions subsequent are not favored in the law and are strictly construed against forfeiture.").

5. *Millis Constr. Co. v. Fairfield Sapphire Valley, Inc.*, 86 N.C. App. 506, 512, 358 S.E.2d 566, 570 (1987) ("The general rule governing bilateral contracts requires that if either party commits a material breach of the contract, the other party should be excused from the obligation to further perform.").

6. *Millis Constr. Co. v. Fairfield Sapphire Valley, Inc.*, 86 N.C. App. 506, 512, 358 S.E.2d 566, 570 (1987).

502.05 CONTRACTS—ISSUE OF BREACH BY REPUDIATION.

The (*state number*) issue reads:

“Did the defendant breach the contract (by repudiation)?”¹

(You will answer this issue only if you have answered the (*state number*) issue “Yes” in favor of the plaintiff.)

On this issue the burden of proof is on the plaintiff. This means that the plaintiff must prove, by the greater weight of the evidence, two things:

First, that before the time arrived for the defendant to perform, the defendant repudiated [the defendant’s entire obligation under the contract]² [the whole contract]³ [a covenant going to the whole contract].⁴ A party to a contract repudiates⁵ [his] [her] [its] obligation when that party expresses, by words or conduct,⁶ a positive, distinct, unequivocal and absolute [refusal] [inability] to perform.

And second, that at the time of the defendant’s repudiation,

[the plaintiff was ready, willing and able to perform the plaintiff’s obligations as agreed and would have done so but for the repudiation by the defendant]⁷

[the plaintiff had performed the plaintiff’s obligations as agreed]⁸

[the plaintiff had partially performed the plaintiff’s obligations as agreed, and was ready, willing and able to perform the plaintiff’s remaining obligations as agreed].⁹

Finally, as to the (*state number*) issue on which the plaintiff has the burden of proof, if you find by the greater weight of the evidence that the defendant breached the contract by repudiation, then it would be your duty to answer this issue “Yes” in favor of the plaintiff.

N.C.P.I.—Civil 502.05
CONTRACTS—ISSUE OF BREACH BY REPUDIATION.
GENERAL CIVIL VOLUME
REPLACEMENT MARCH 2024

If, on the other hand, you fail to so find, then it would be your duty to answer this issue “No” in favor of the defendant.

1. Note that a repudiation is not *ipso facto* a breach. The plaintiff must elect to make it a breach. *Profile Invs. No. 25, LLC v. Ammons East Corp.*, 207 N.C. App. 232, 237, 700 S.E.2d 232, 235 (2010) (quoting *Edwards v. Proctor*, 173 N.C. 41, 44, 91 S.E. 584, 585 (1917)). Consequently, “breach by repudiation depends not only upon the statement and actions of the allegedly repudiating party but also upon the response of the non-repudiating party.” *Profile Invs.*, 207 N.C. App. at 237, 700 S.E.2d at 236 (citation omitted).

2. An installment contract invokes discrete and separate obligations in an agreement. See N.C.G.S. § 25-2-612. Nonetheless, the absolute repudiation of all future obligations in an installment contract triggers the statute of limitations upon the non-breaching party’s discovery of future non-performance, rather than when the performance would have become due. *Christenbury Eye Ctr., P.A. v. Medflow, Inc.*, 370 N.C. 1, 7, 802 S.E.2d 888, 893 (2017) (citation omitted).

3. “For repudiation to result in a breach of contract, ‘the refusal to perform must be of the whole contract or of a covenant going to the whole consideration, and must be distinct, unequivocal, and absolute.’” *Profile Invs. No. 25, LLC v. Ammons East Corp.*, 207 N.C. App. 232, 237, 700 S.E.2d 232, 236 (2010) (quoting *Edwards v. Proctor*, 173 N.C. 41, 44, 91 S.E. 584, 585 (1917)).

4. “For repudiation to result in a breach of contract, ‘the refusal to perform must be of the whole contract or of a covenant going to the whole consideration, and must be distinct, unequivocal, and absolute.’” *Profile Invs. No. 25, LLC v. Ammons East Corp.*, 207 N.C. App. 232, 237, 700 S.E.2d 232, 236 (2010) (quoting *Edwards v. Proctor*, 173 N.C. 41, 44, 91 S.E. 584, 585 (1917)).

5. See *Millis Constr. Co. v. Fairfield Sapphire Valley*, 86 N.C. App. 506, 510, 358 S.E.2d 566, 569 (1987) (“Repudiation is a positive statement by one party to the other party indicating that he will not or cannot substantially perform his contractual duties. When a party repudiates his obligations under the contract before the time for performance under the terms of the contract, the issue of anticipatory breach or breach by anticipatory repudiation arises.”) (citations omitted); *Profile Invs. No. 25, LLC v. Ammons East Corp.*, 207 N.C. App. 232, 700 S.E.2d 232 (2010). Sometimes this form of breach is referred to as “anticipatory breach,” see *Millis*, 86 N.C. App. at 510, 358 S.E.2d at 569, or “breach by renunciation,” see *Edwards v. Proctor*, 173 N.C. at 45, 91 S.E. at 585.

6. See *Edwards v. Proctor*, 173 N.C. 41, 46, 91 S.E. 584, 585 (1917); *Gordon v. Howard*, 94 N.C. App. 149, 152, 379 S.E.2d 674, 676 (1989); see also *Phoenix Ltd. P’ship v. Simpson*, 201 N.C. App. 493, 500, 688 S.E.2d 717, 722 (2009) (standing for the proposition that repudiation may be inferred from conduct that naturally leads another person to believe that the repudiating party refuses or is unable to perform on the contract).

7. See *Kidd v. Early*, 289 N.C. 343, 364, 222 S.E.2d 392, 407 (1976); see also *Curran v. Barefoot*, 183 N.C. App. 331, 335, 645 S.E.2d 187, 190 (2007) (“Plaintiff’s offer to perform does not have to be shown where defendant refused to honor or repudiates the contract ... As long as plaintiff is able, ready, and willing to perform the conditions of the contract remaining to be performed, he will not be barred from relief.”) (citation omitted).

8. *Millis Constr. Co. v. Fairfield Sapphire Valley*, 86 N.C. App. 506, 512, 358 S.E.2d 566, 570 (1987).

N.C.P.I.—Civil 502.05
CONTRACTS—ISSUE OF BREACH BY REPUDIATION.
GENERAL CIVIL VOLUME
REPLACEMENT MARCH 2024

9. *Millis Constr. Co. v. Fairfield Sapphire Valley*, 86 N.C. App. 506, 511, 358 S.E.2d 566, 569 (1987).

502.10 CONTRACTS—ISSUE OF BREACH BY PREVENTION.

The (*state number*) issue reads:

“Did the defendant breach the contract (by preventing the plaintiff from being able to perform the plaintiff's obligations)¹?”

(You will answer this issue only if you have answered the (*state number*) issue “Yes” in favor of the plaintiff.)

On this issue the burden of proof is on the plaintiff. This means that the plaintiff must prove, by the greater weight of the evidence, two things:

First, that the defendant knowingly [prevented] [hindered] [made more costly] the plaintiff's [performance of] [ability to abide by] a material term of the contract.²

(A material term is one that is essential to the transaction, that is, a term which, if omitted or modified, would have caused one of the parties to withhold assent or to bargain for a substantially different term. Not every term in a contract is material. In determining whether a term is material, you may consider the following factors:

[the subject matter and purpose of the contract]

[the intentions of the parties]

[the scope of performance reasonably expected by each party]

[the prior dealings of the parties]

[any custom, practice or usage so commonly known to other reasonable persons, in similar situations, that the parties knew or should have known of its existence]

[*state other factors supported by the evidence*)).

And Second, that, at the time the defendant engaged in the defendant's conduct, the plaintiff was willing to perform the plaintiff's obligations as agreed and would have done so but for the conduct of the defendant.

In this case the plaintiff contends, and the defendant denies, that the defendant prevented the plaintiff from being able to perform the plaintiff's obligations [as follows] [in one or more of the following ways]: (*Give the plaintiff's contention(s) by identifying each material term which the defendant's conduct allegedly prevented the plaintiff from performing.*)

The plaintiff further contends, and the defendant denies, that the plaintiff was willing to perform the plaintiff's obligations as agreed and would have done so but for the conduct of the defendant.

Finally, as to the (*state number*) issue on which the plaintiff has the burden of proof, if you find by the greater weight of the evidence that the defendant breached the contract (by preventing the plaintiff from being able to perform the plaintiff's obligations), then it would be your duty to answer this issue "Yes" in favor of the plaintiff.

If, on the other hand, you fail to so find, then it would be your duty to answer this issue "No" in favor of the defendant.

1. Specify that the basis for breach is prevention when the jury is also instructed on breach by non-performance (N.C.P.I.—Civil 502.00) or by repudiation (N.C.P.I.—Civil 502.05).

2. *Bullock v. Tucker*, 262 N.C. App. 511, 523–24, 822 S.E. 2d 654, 662 (2018).

502.12 CONTRACTS—ISSUE OF BREACH—MATERIALITY.¹

NOTE WELL: Use this instruction for breach when materiality is at issue. See N.C.P.I.—Civil 502.00 (Contracts—Issue of Breach) for the issue of breach when materiality is not at issue.

The *(state number)* issue reads:

“Did the defendant breach a material term of the contract?”

(You will answer this issue only if you have answered the *(state number)* issue “Yes” in favor of the plaintiff.)

In this case the plaintiff contends [and the defendant denies] that *(identify each alleged material term)* was a material term of the contract. The plaintiff² bears the burden of proving, by the greater weight of the evidence, that *(identify each alleged material term)* was material to the contract.

A material term is one that is essential to the transaction, that is, a term which, if omitted or modified, would have caused one of the parties to withhold assent or to bargain for a substantially different term. Not every term in a contract is material.

In determining whether a term is material, you may consider the following factors:

[the subject matter and purpose of the contract]

[the intentions of the parties]

[the scope of performance reasonably expected by each party]

[the prior dealings of the parties]

[any custom, practice or usage so commonly known to other reasonable persons, in similar situations, that the parties knew or should have known of its existence]

[state other factors supported by the evidence].

In this case the plaintiff contends, and the defendant denies, that defendant failed to [perform] [abide by] a material term of the contract [by] [in one or more of the following ways]:

(Read all contention(s) of breach.)

Finally, as to the (*state number*) issue on which the plaintiff has the burden of proof, if you find by the greater weight of the evidence that the defendant breached a material term of the contract, then it would be your duty to answer this issue “Yes” in favor of the plaintiff.

If, on the other hand, you fail to so find, then it would be your duty to answer this issue “No” in favor of the defendant.

1. The issue of materiality may be raised by either party and, in a multiple breach situation, could affect some breaches but not others. Therefore, in such cases, the judge should consider modifying this instruction to fit the needs of the case.

2. Although the case law is largely silent on who must prove that a contract term is material, it appears that the burden lies with the party who must prove materiality as an essential component of the relief he or she is seeking, either on a claim (plaintiff) or as an affirmative defense (defendant).

503.06 CONTRACTS—ISSUE OF COMMON LAW REMEDY—STATEMENT OF
DAMAGES ISSUE.

NOTE WELL: This is the first component of the compensatory damages series which runs through N.C.P.I.—Civil 503.79 (Contracts—Issue of Common Law Remedy—Damages Mandate). Select direct, incidental and consequential damages instructions as appropriate.

The (*state number*) issue reads:

“What amount is the plaintiff entitled to recover from the defendant for breach of contract?”

If you have answered the (*state number*) issue “Yes” in favor of the plaintiff, the plaintiff is entitled to recover nominal damages even without proof of actual damages.¹ Nominal damages consist of some trivial amount such as one dollar in recognition of the technical damage resulting from the breach.²

The plaintiff may also be entitled to recover actual damages. On this issue the burden of proof is on the plaintiff. This means that the plaintiff must prove, by the greater weight of the evidence, the amount of actual damages sustained as a result of the breach. Actual damages are the fair compensation to be awarded to a person for any [past] [present] [future]³ economic injury resulting from a breach of contract.

A party damaged by a breach of contract is entitled to be placed, insofar as this can be done by money, in the same position that party would have occupied if there had been no breach of the contract.⁴

In determining the amount, if any, you award the plaintiff, you will consider the evidence you have heard as to (each of the following types of damages):

[Direct damages]

[Incidental damages]

[Consequential damages]

[state any other type of damages supported by the evidence].

The total of all damages are to be awarded in one lump sum.

I will now explain the law of damages as it related to each of these.

[Direct damages are the economic losses that usually or customarily result⁵ from a breach of contract and that might accrue to any person similarly injured.⁶]

NOTE WELL: Definitions for each type of damages are provided elsewhere in these Instructions.

- *As to direct damages, consider substituting or supplementing the above definition with a more specific definition based on one or more of the direct damages instructions at N.C.P.I.—Civil 503.12 (Contracts—Issue of Common Law Remedy—Direct Damages—Buyer’s Measure of Recovery for a Seller’s Breach of Contract to Convey Real Property) through N.C.P.I.—Civil 503.54 (Contracts—Issue of Common Law Remedy—Direct Damages—Employer’s Measure of Recovery for Employee’s Wrongful Termination of an Employment Contract).*
- *As to incidental damages, see N.C.P.I.—Civil 503.70 (Contracts—Issue of Common Law Remedy—Incidental Damages).*
- *As to consequential damages, see N.C.P.I.—Civil 503.73 (Contracts—Issue of Common Law Remedy—Consequential Damages).*

1. *Bowen v. Fidelity Bank*, 209 N.C. 140, 144, 183 S.E. 266, 268 (1936); *Delta Environmental Consultants of North Carolina, Inc. v. Wysong & Miles Co.*, 132 N.C. App. 160, 171-72, 510 S.E.2d 690, 698, *disc. rev. denied*, 350 N.C. 379, 536 S.E.2d 70 (1999); *Cole v. Sorie*, 41 N.C. App. 485, 490, 255 S.E.2d 271, 274, *disc. rev. denied*, 298 N.C. 294, 259 S.E.2d 911 (1979).

2. Nominal damages consist of some trifling amount and are recoverable where some legal right has been invaded but no actual loss or substantial injury has been sustained.

Nominal damages are awarded in recognition of the right and of the technical injury resulting from its violation. *Hairston v. Atlantic Greyhound Corporation*, 220 N.C. 642, 644, 18 S.E.2d 166, 168 (1942) (quoting *Hutton & Bourbonnais v. Cook*, 173 N.C. 496, 92 S.E. 355 (1917)).

3. *Wilkinson v. Dunbar*, 149 N.C. 20, 25, 62 S.E. 748, 751 (1908) (recovery for both present and prospective damages is permissible).

4. *Lee Cycle Center, Inc. v. Wilson Cycle Center, Inc.*, 143 N.C. App. 1, 9, 545 S.E.2d 745, 750 (2001) (quoting *Perfecting Serv. Co. v. Product Dev. & Sales Co.*, 259 N.C. 400, 415, 131 S.E.2d 9, 21 (1963)).

5. *Maynard v. Crook*, 289 N.C. App. 357, 890 S.E.2d 164 (2023) (“[G]eneral damages are such as might accrue to any person similarly injured.” (quoting *Penner v. Elliott*, 225 N.C. 33, 35, 33 S.E.2d 124, 126 (1945))).

6. *Stanback v. Stanback*, 297 N.C. 181, 187, 254 S.E.2d 611, 616 (1979) (“In awarding damages, compensation is given for only those injuries that the defendant had reason to foresee as a probable result of his breach when the contract was made. If the injury is one that follows the breach in the usual course of events, there is sufficient reason for the defendant to foresee it; otherwise, it must be shown specifically that the defendant had reason to know the facts and to foresee the injury.”).

503.79 CONTRACTS—ISSUE OF COMMON LAW REMEDY—DAMAGES
MANDATE.

The plaintiff's damages are to be reasonably determined from the evidence presented.

The plaintiff is not required to prove with mathematical certainty the extent of the financial injury in order to recover damages. Thus, the plaintiff should not be denied damages simply because they cannot be calculated with exactness or a high degree of mathematical certainty. However, an award of damages must be based on evidence which shows the amount of the plaintiff's damages with reasonable certainty. You may not award any damages based upon mere speculation or conjecture.¹ [Additionally, the plaintiff is not entitled to recover twice for the same element of damages.]

Finally, as to the (*state number*) issue on which the plaintiff has the burden of proof, if you find by the greater weight of the evidence the amount of damages sustained by the plaintiff by reason of the defendant's breach of contract, then it would be your duty to write that amount in the blank space provided.

If, on the other hand, you fail to so find, then it would be your duty to write a nominal amount such as "One Dollar" in the blank space provided.

1. "[A] party seeking recovery for losses occasioned by another's breach of contract need not prove the amount of his prospective damages with absolute certainty; a reasonable showing will suffice Substantial damages may be recovered, though plaintiff can only give his loss proximately." *Beroth Oil Co. v. Whiteheart*, 173 N.C. App. 89, 95, 618 S.E.2d 739, 744 (2005) (quoting *Pipkin v. Thomas & Hill, Inc.*, 298 N.C. 278, 287, 258 S.E.2d 778, 785 (1979)).

800.80 INVASION OF PRIVACY—USE OF UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEM—
SURVEILLANCE.

The (*state number*) issue reads:

“Did the defendant use an unmanned aircraft system to conduct surveillance of the [plaintiff] [a dwelling occupied by the plaintiff and the dwelling’s curtilage] [the private real property of the plaintiff] without the plaintiff’s consent?”

On this issue the burden of proof is on the plaintiff. This mean that the plaintiff must prove, by the greater weight of the evidence, three things:

First, that the defendant used an unmanned aircraft system. [An unmanned aircraft system is an aircraft that is operated without the possibility of human intervention from within or on the aircraft as well as its associated elements. These elements include communication links and components that control the unmanned aircraft that are required for the pilot in command to operate safely and efficiently in the national airspace system.]¹ [A drone is an unmanned aircraft system].

Second, that the defendant used an unmanned aircraft system to conduct surveillance² of [the plaintiff] [a dwelling occupied by the plaintiff and the dwelling’s curtilage] [the private real property of the plaintiff].

Third, that the surveillance by the defendant was without the consent of [the plaintiff] [the owner of the real property] [the easement holder of the real property] [the lessee of the real property].

Finally, as to this (*state number*) issue on which the plaintiff has the burden of proof, if you find, by the greater weight of the evidence, that the defendant used an unmanned aircraft system to conduct surveillance of the [plaintiff] [a dwelling occupied by the plaintiff and the dwelling’s curtilage]

N.C.P.I.—Civil 800.80
INVASION OF PRIVACY—USE OF UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEM—
SURVEILLANCE
GENERAL CIVIL VOLUME
MARCH 2024
N.C.G.S. § 15A-300.1

[the private real property of the plaintiff] without the consent of [the plaintiff]
[the owner of the real property] [the easement holder of the real property]
[the lessee of the real property], then it would be your duty to answer this
issue “Yes” in favor of the plaintiff.

If, on the other hand, you fail to so find, then it would be your duty to
answer this issue “No” in favor of the defendant.

1. N.C.G.S. § 15A-300.1(4) (defining unmanned aircraft and unmanned aircraft system).

2. N.C.G.S. § 15A-300.1 does not define surveillance.

800.81 INVASION OF PRIVACY—USE OF UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEM—
PHOTOGRAPHS.

The (*state number*) issue reads:

“Did the defendant use an unmanned aircraft system to photograph the plaintiff without the plaintiff’s consent for the purpose of publishing or otherwise publicly disseminating the photograph(s)?”

On this issue the burden of proof is on the plaintiff. This mean that the plaintiff must prove, by the greater weight of the evidence, four things:

First, that the defendant used an unmanned aircraft system. [An unmanned aircraft system is an aircraft that is operated without the possibility of human intervention from within or on the aircraft as well as its associated elements. These elements include communication links and components that control the unmanned aircraft that are required for the pilot in command to operate safely and efficiently in the national airspace system.]¹ [A drone is an unmanned aircraft system].

Second, that the defendant used an unmanned aircraft system to take [a] photograph(s) of the plaintiff.

Third, that the photograph(s) taken of the plaintiff [was] [were] without the plaintiff’s consent.

Fourth, that the defendant’s purpose in taking the photograph(s) was for publishing or otherwise publicly disseminating the photograph(s).²

Finally, as to this (*state number*) issue on which the plaintiff has the burden of proof, if you find, by the greater weight of the evidence, that the defendant used an unmanned aircraft system to photograph the plaintiff without the plaintiff’s consent for the purpose of publishing or otherwise

N.C.P.I.—Civil 800.81
INVASION OF PRIVACY—USE OF UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEM—
PHOTOGRAPHS.
GENERAL CIVIL VOLUME
MARCH 2024
N.C.G.S. § 15A-300.1

disseminating the photograph(s), then it would be your duty to answer this issue “Yes” in favor of the plaintiff.

If, on the other hand, you fail to so find, then it would be your duty to answer this issue “No” in favor of the defendant.

1. N.C.G.S. § 15A-300.1(4) (defining unmanned aircraft and unmanned aircraft system).

2. N.C.G.S. § 15A-300.1(b)(2) does not apply to photographs taken for newsgathering, for newsworthy events, or in events or places to which the general public is invited. If facts supporting any of these situations are pled and evidence supporting these situations is presented at trial, then there may be an additional component to the fourth element for the jury to consider, or if the trial judge determines this is an affirmative defense, an additional issue for jury to consider upon which the defendant has the burden of proof.

N.C.P.I.—Civil 800.82
INVASION OF PRIVACY—USE OF UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEM—NUMBER
OF PHOTOGRAPHS.
GENERAL CIVIL VOLUME
MAY 2024
N.C.G.S. § 15A-300.1

800.82 INVASION OF PRIVACY—USE OF UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEM—
NUMBER OF PHOTOGRAPHS.

The (*state number*) issue reads:

“How many photographs¹ of the plaintiff were published or otherwise publicly disseminated?”²

If you have answered the (*state number*) issue “Yes” in favor of the plaintiff, then you must determine how many photographs of the plaintiff taken by the defendant with an unmanned aircraft system without the plaintiff’s consent were published or otherwise publicly disseminated. On this issue the burden of proof is on the plaintiff. This means that the plaintiff must prove, by the greater weight of the evidence, the number of photographs of the plaintiff that were published or otherwise publicly disseminated. These photographs must be photographs that were taken by the defendant, with an unmanned aircraft system, without the plaintiff’s consent, and for the purpose of publication or other public dissemination.

Finally, as to this (*state number*) issue on which the plaintiff has the burden of proof, it would be your duty to determine the number of photographs of the plaintiff that were published or otherwise publicly disseminated and write that number in the blank space provided.

1. N.C.G.S. § 15A-300.1(e) encapsulates videos, in addition to photographs, for the first time within this claim for relief. As the circumstances may require, revise this instruction accordingly.

2. This issue is meant to aid the trial judge in calculating liquidated damages as set forth in N.C.G.S. § 15A-300.1(e).

800.83 INVASION OF PRIVACY—USE OF UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEM—
ACTUAL DAMAGES.

NOTE WELL: If the plaintiff brings a claim based on surveillance (section 15A-300.1(b)(1)) and publishing or otherwise publicly disseminating photographs or videos (section 15A-300.1(b)(2)), the judge may consider a special interrogatory to have the jury separate damages for each basis.

NOTE WELL: If, prior to submission to the jury, the plaintiff elects to recover five thousand dollars (\$5,000) for each photograph that is published or otherwise disseminated pursuant to this statute, then this instruction need not be given. However, the plaintiff may seek both liquidated damages and actual damages, and defer election until after the jury's verdict. The jury should not be instructed on the amount of liquidated damages.¹

The *(state number)* issue reads:

"What amount is the plaintiff entitled to recover from the defendant for the unauthorized use of an unmanned aircraft system to [surveil] [photograph] the plaintiff?"

If you have answered the *(state number)* issue "Yes" in favor of the plaintiff, then the plaintiff is entitled to recover nominal damages even without proof of actual damages. Nominal damages consist of some trivial amount such as one dollar in recognition of a technical injury to the plaintiff.

The plaintiff may also be entitled to recover actual damages. On this issue the burden of proof is on the plaintiff. This means that the plaintiff must prove, by the greater weight of the evidence, the amount of actual damages proximately caused by the wrongful conduct of the defendant. Proximate cause is a cause which in a natural and continuous sequence produces a person's [injury] [damage], and is a cause which a reasonable and prudent person could have foreseen would probably produce such [injury] [damage]

or some other similar injurious result. There may be more than one proximate cause of [an injury] [damage]. Therefore, the plaintiff need not prove that the defendant's wrongful conduct was the sole proximate cause of the [injury] [damage]. The plaintiff must prove, by the greater weight of the evidence, only that the defendant's wrongful conduct was a proximate cause.

(Here give appropriate instructions as to the type of damage claimed if supported by the evidence, e.g.,

N.C.P.I.—Civil—810.04 ("Personal Injury Damages—Medical Expenses"),

N.C.P.I.—Civil—810.06 ("Personal Injury Damages—Loss of Earnings"),

N.C.P.I.—Civil—810.08 ("Personal Injury Damages—Pain and Suffering"), etc.)

I instruct you that if you reach this issue, your decision must be based on the evidence and the rules of law I have given you with respect to the measure of damages. You are not required to accept the amount of damages suggested by the parties or their attorneys. Your award must be fair and just. You should remember that you are not seeking to punish either party, and you are not awarding or withholding anything on the basis of sympathy or pity.

Finally, as to this (*state number*) issue on which the plaintiff has the burden of proof, if you find, by the greater weight of the evidence, the amount of actual damages proximately caused by the wrongful conduct of the defendant, then it would be your duty to write that amount in the blank space provided.

If, on the other hand, you fail to so find, then it would be your duty to write a nominal sum such as "One Dollar" in the blank space provided.

N.C.P.I.—Civil 800.83

INVASION OF PRIVACY—USE OF UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEM—ACTUAL
DAMAGES.

GENERAL CIVIL VOLUME

MAY 2024

N.C.G.S. § 15A-300.1

1. N.C.G.S. § 15A-300.1(e) provides that a plaintiff may elect, in lieu of actual damages, to recover five thousand dollars (\$5,000) for each photograph or video that is published or otherwise disseminated pursuant to this statute, as well as reasonable costs and attorneys' fees and injunctive or other relief as determined by the court. For the instruction used to calculate liquidated damages, see N.C.P.I.—Civil 800.82 (Invasion of Privacy—Use of Unmanned Aircraft System—Number of Photographs).

840.15 EASEMENT BY PLAT.

The (state number) issue reads:

"Does the [plaintiff] [defendant] have an easement [on] [over] [across] [under] the land of the [defendant] [plaintiff] as shown on the plat recorded in Book (*state book number*) Page (*state page number*) of the (*state county*) Registry?"

(An easement is a right to make (a) specific use(s) of land owned by another.¹ One who has an easement does not own the land but has only the right to use the land for the purpose(s) of the easement.² The owner of land burdened by an easement continues to have all of the rights of a landowner which are not inconsistent with the easement.³)

In this case, the (*party attempting to prove the easement by plat*) claims the right to an easement arising from (*describe recording*) in Book (*state book number*) Page (*state page number*). An easement created in such manner is called an easement by plat.⁴

On this issue the burden of proof is on the (*party attempting to prove the easement by plat*). This means that the (*party attempting to prove the easement by plat*) must prove, by the greater weight of the evidence, two things:

First, that [developer] [one or more previous owners in the chain of title] had the intent to share use of the land in certain specific respects with owners of other property shown on the plat.⁵ Such intention may be shown by deed, by words, or by acts.⁶ The evidence in support of the intent of a [developer] [and] [or] [one or more previous owners in the chain of title] to create an easement by plat should be clear and unmistakable in purpose and decisive in character to have that effect.⁷

Second, that a deed in the (*party attempting to prove the easement by plat*)’s chain of title must include reference to the recorded plat claimed to have given rise to the easement⁸ and the easement areas must be sufficiently identified on the recorded plat.⁹

Finally, as to the (*state number*) issue on which the (*party attempting to prove the easement by plat*) has the burden of proof, if you find by the greater weight of the evidence that the [developer] [one or more previous owners in the chain of title] had the intent to share use of the land in certain specific respects with owners of other property shown on the plat, such intention shown by clear and unmistakable evidence to that effect, and that the recorded plat claimed to have been an expression of that intent was referenced by sufficient identification in a deed within the (*party attempting to prove the easement by plat*)’s chain of title, then it would be your duty to answer this issue “Yes” in favor of the (*party attempting to prove the easement by plat*).

If, on the other hand, you fail to so find, then it would be your duty to answer this issue "No" in favor of the (*party refuting easement by plat*).

1. *Builders Supplies Co. of Goldsboro, N.C. v. Gainey*, 282 N.C. 261, 266, 192 S.E.2d 449, 453 (1972).

2. *Thomas v. Morris*, 190 N.C. 244, 244, 249–50, 129 S.E. 623, 626 (1925).

3. *North Asheboro-Central Falls Sanitary Dist. v. Canoy*, 252 N.C. 749, 753, 114 S.E.2d 577, 581 (1960); see also *Nantahala Power & Light Co. v. Carringer*, 220 N.C. 57, 57, 16 S.E.2d 453, 454 (1941); *Duke Power Co. v. Rogers*, 271 N.C. 318, 320, 156 S.E.2d 244, 246 (1967).

4. *Cleveland Realty Co. v. Hobbs*, 261 N.C. 414, 421, 135 S.E.2d 30, 35–36 (1964) (noting North Carolina’s recognition of appurtenant easements by use of a plat map); see also *Cape Homeowners Ass’n, Inc. v. S. Destiny, LLC*, 284 N.C. App. 237, 248, 876 S.E.2d 568, 575 (2022); *Home Realty Co. & Insurance Agency v. Red Fox Country Club Owners Ass’n*, 274 N.C. App. 258, 277–78, 852 S.E.2d 413, 426–27 (2020); *Sauls v. Barbour*, 273 N.C. App. 325, 333, 848 S.E.2d 292, 299 (2020); *Friends of Crooked Creek, L.L.C. v. C.C. Partners, Inc.*, 254 N.C. App. 384, 392, 802 S.E.2d 908, 914 (2017); *Shear v. Stevens Bldg. Co.*, 107 N.C. App. 154, 162, 418 S.E.2d 841, 846 (1992).

N.C.P.I.—Civil 840.15
EASEMENT BY PLAT.
GENERAL CIVIL VOLUME
OCTOBER 2023

5. *Friends of Crooked Creek, L.L.C. v. C.C. Partners, Inc.*, 254 N.C. App. 384, 392, 802 S.E.2d 908, 914 (2017); *Harry v. Crescent Res., Inc.*, 136 N.C. App. 71, 81, 523 S.E.2d 118, 124 (1999).

6. *See Kraft v. Town of Mt. Olive*, 183 N.C. App. 415, 418, 645 S.E.2d 132, 135 (2007).

7. *See Hovey v. Sand Dollar Shores Homeowner's Ass'n, Inc.*, 276 N.C. App. 281, 287, 857 S.E.2d 358, 363 (2021).

8. *Friends of Crooked Creek, L.L.C. v. C.C. Partners, Inc.*, 254 N.C. App. 384, 393, 802 S.E.2d 908, 914 (2017).

9. *Cape Homeowners Ass'n, Inc. v. S. Destiny, LLC*, 284 N.C. App. 237, 248, 876 S.E.2d 568, 575 (2022).