



Heidi Ruchala

Partner

Buffalo

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Education

- Cleveland-Marshall College of Law, *Cum Laude*, JD
- University at Buffalo, *Cum Laude*, BA

Practices & Industries

- Mass & Toxic Torts
- Torts & Products Liability Defense

Admitted to Practice

- New York
- New Jersey

Court Admissions

- US District Court for the Western District of New York

Biography

With over 20 years of legal experience, Heidi primarily concentrates her practice on defending cases involving toxic substances, products liability, personal injuries, and fatal accidents in both state and federal court. She serves as national coordinating counsel in the asbestos-exposure hotspots of Illinois and West Virginia and as defense counsel for WNY fairs, festivals, and other amusement venues.

Heidi is deeply involved in defending asbestos, benzene, beryllium, and lead-paint litigation and handles cases across New York State, including in New York City, and in multi-district litigation in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania. Heidi also defends claims involving defective product designs, failures-to-warn, slips and falls, and motor-vehicle accidents as well as general insurance claims. She routinely coordinates multiple defendants and experts for risk management, defense, and trial preparation in products-liability claims.

She has significant experience representing corporate clients, including large international and Fortune 500 companies, across industries that include material handling, heavy equipment, roofing, and industrial-product distribution and supply.

A hallmark of Heidi's work is her focus on planning, proactivity, and mitigation. She is appreciated for her client-focused approach to managing potential litigation that includes using thorough case analyses to determine ways to minimize costs, often through strategic early resolution or group settlements.

In addition to her own practice, Heidi serves as chair of the firm's Wellness Committee.

Bar Associations

- American Bar Association
- Bar Association of Erie County
- New York State Bar Association

Selected Memberships & Affiliations

- ARIAS-US
- Barclay Damon's Women's Forum
- Women Lawyers of Western New York

Representative Experience

- Successfully defended multistate products-liability actions.
- Resolved numerous asbestos products-liability cases during various phases of trial, arbitration, and mediation.
- Strategically planned the defense of multiple clients in managing mass-tort litigation.
- Defended complex mass tort cases through trial that involved deceased plaintiffs. Through intensive investigation, successfully refuted the plaintiffs' witnesses' testimony, resulting in the dismissal of the case against the client.
- Successfully obtained summary judgment dismissal of the action with prejudice. After the client, a distributor of automotive products and solvents, made a prima facie showing of entitlement to summary judgment based on indemnity agreements and pass-through liability theory of defense, the plaintiff failed to demonstrate that the client had any independent liability for which it was not entitled to indemnification from the product manufacturer(s).

Prior Experience

- Damon Morey LLP, Partner
- Jaeckle, Fleischmann & Mugel, LLP, Associate

Selected Community Activities

- Western New York People Against Trafficking Humans Coalition, Founding Board of Directors Member
- Stop Trafficking of People, Volunteer
- Starpoint School PTA, Board of Directors Member
- John R. Oishei Children's Hospital of Buffalo Foundation, Together With Individual Goals Member
- Victory Sports, Board Member

Selected Honors

- Selected to *Super Lawyers* Upstate New York: Class Action/Mass Torts, 2016–2023
- Selected to *Super Lawyers* Upstate New York Rising Stars: Personal Injury Defense: General, 2013

Selected Speaking Engagements

- American Conference Institute National Advanced Forum on Asbestos Claims & Litigation, "Spotlight on Premise Owners, Contractors, Suppliers, and the Continued Expansion of Take-Home Exposure"
- NYS Senate Roundtable Discussion with Senators Gallivan and Grisanti, "Human Trafficking in Upstate New York"
- Western New York Paralegals Association, "Medicare Liens in Personal Injury Settlements"

Selected Media

- *ARIAS-US Quarterly*, "Understanding the Impact of Cosmetic Talc Case Verdicts"

Selected Alerts & Blog Posts

- EPA's Continued Focus and Mandated Reporting on PFAS ("Forever Chemicals")
- Notable Talc Case May Increase Similar Claims
- Court Of Appeals Significantly Expands Manufacturer's Duty To Warn
- New York's Highest Court Set to Clarify Years of Conflicting Precedent in Product Liability Cases
- Counsel Failed To Establish Causation In Toxic Tort Matter