

# Curriculum Vitae: Thomas S. Ehrhardt



**Thomas S. Ehrhardt**  
**Partner**

Crown Point, IN  
P: 219.794.1888  
F: 219.794.1892  
tsehrhardt@kopkalaw.com

## ADMISSIONS

Indiana

U.S. Court of Appeals for the  
Seventh Circuit

U.S. District Courts for the  
Northern and Southern Districts  
of Indiana

U.S. District Court for the  
Northern District of Illinois

- Trial Bar

## EDUCATION

Valparaiso University School of  
Law, J.D.

University of Notre Dame, B.A.,  
Government and International  
Relations

Thomas S. Ehrhardt has tried over 80 cases to verdict and is one of the firm's most seasoned trial advocates. His trial experience, in both state and federal courts, includes heavy trucking, wrongful death, catastrophic personal injury, breach of contract, premises liability, first party bad faith, UM/UIM, professional liability, and claims under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Many of these matters involved multi-million-dollar claims.

Associated with litigation defense firms for over 25 years, Tom concentrates his practice in the fields of trial advocacy, transportation and logistics, to include heavy trucking, intermodal, cargo and hazardous material claims. Prior to attending law school, Tom worked in management for the nation's largest privately held trucking company and LTL carrier. His "hands on" knowledge of the industry, from dispatch, driver safety requirements, day-to-day logistics, labor relations, break bulk operations and risk management provides Tom with a keen understanding of multiple transportation business models. More importantly, it provides instant rapport with the drivers and companies that Tom represents.

Tom is an active member of the firm's transportation committee and ensures that each office has a proper Rapid Response Team ready to deploy at a moment's notice to assist in early "on-site" catastrophic trucking losses. The Team members consist of attorneys, independent adjusters and professional engineers.

Several national fleets and insurance companies have Tom on call 24/7 to assist in rapid response situations as his enthusiasm for "boots on the ground" provides invaluable clarification to sometimes confusing information and distressing conditions. Tom is accustomed to arriving at accident scenes during all hours of the day and night. He and his Rapid Response Team members ensure that crucial evidence is secured, and witness statements are obtained, thereby allowing clients and risk management professionals to assess preliminary exposure and available defenses. On several occasions, Tom has served as "parachute counsel" in the review and audit of high exposure or complex claims nearing arbitration or trial.

Tom is a frequent presenter on topics including the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Act, risk management, tort claims and trial skills. While in law school, Tom externed for the Honorable James T. Moody of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Indiana. In his spare time, Tom is active in his church, community and charitable foundations.



**KOPKA PINKUS DOLIN**

## MEMBERSHIPS

Indiana Motor Truck Association (IMTA)

Trucking Industry Defense Association (TIDA)

Transportation Lawyers Association (TLA)

Defense Trial Counsel of Indiana Seventh Circuit Bar Association

## Trial and Case Highlights

- Tom's aggressive handling of rapid responses to emergency transportation claims has resulted in securing critical evidence from otherwise obscure sources. In two recent rapid response cases, Tom was able to secure surveillance video from nearby commercial establishments. The owners of each establishment initially claimed that the video cameras were focused on the perimeters of the property and would not capture scenes from adjacent roadways. After reviewing the video (within a few hours of the collisions), Tom was able to secure expanded video surveillance providing critical evidence supporting his driver's version of events. In one video, the surveillance contradicted an adverse statement obtained from a purported "eyewitness".
- Tom has also tried multiple cases resulting in favorable jury verdicts. In a federal wrongful death case, Tom obtained a defense verdict after retaining several technical expert witnesses, dealing with multiple adverse witnesses, and facing contentious issues as to causation. The final pre-trial settlement demand was \$8.5 million. After a five-day trial, the jury deliberated for less than an hour before returning a defense verdict.
- In another wrongful death case, involving a minor, Tom was faced with multiple emotional distress claims from family members who witnessed or came upon the scene shortly thereafter. The family members were able to bring powerful emotional distress claims due to a then recent appellate decision allowing such claims. This was one of the first cases in Indiana applying the expansion of emotional damage claims even though the family members were not directly involved in the incident or traditional "zone of danger". By engaging the case early and with aggressive litigation, the case settled for an amount well below the client's reserve.

---

## Reported Decisions

*Harris v. A.C. & S, Inc.*, 785 N.E.2d 1087 (Ind. 2003)

*Jurich v. Garlock, Inc.*, 785 N.E.2d 1093 (Ind. 2003)

*Serna v. Malinckrodt Group, Inc.*, 824 N.E.2d 772 (Ind. Ct. App. 2005)

*Malott v. State Farm Mutual Automobile Ins. Co.*, 798 N.E.2d 924 (Ind. Ct. App. 2003)

*Armstrong v. Cerestar*, 775 N.E.2d 360 (Ind. Ct. App. 2002)

*Gregor v. Szarmach*, 706 N.E.2d 360 (Ind. Ct. App. 1999)

## Presentations

- Multiple CLE presentations and in-house seminars on risk management, FMCSA regulation compliance and trial advocacy.



KOPKA PINKUS DOLIN