

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF IOWA
CENTRAL DIVISION

MENARD, INC.,

Plaintiff,

vs.

MSF TRANSPORT, LLC,

Defendant.

4:19-cv-00147-HCA

PRELIMINARY JURY INSTRUCTIONS

Members of the Jury: We are about to begin the trial of the case about which you have heard some details during the process of jury selection. There are certain instructions you should have now in order to understand what will be presented before you, and how you should conduct yourselves during the trial. At the end of the trial I will give you more instructions. I also may give you instructions during the trial. All instructions – those I give you now and those I give you later – whether they are in writing or given to you orally – are equally important and binding on you and you must follow them all. Do not single out some instructions and ignore others, because all the instructions are important. On considering these instructions, you will attach no importance or significance whatsoever to the order in which they are given.

By your verdict, you will decide disputed issues of fact. I will decide all questions of law that arise during the trial.

PRELIMINARY INSTRUCTION NO. 1

This is a civil lawsuit brought by plaintiff Menard, Inc. against defendant MSF Transport, LLC. On December 5, 2018, a motor-vehicle accident took place between a tractor-trailer operated by Menard, Inc. employee Bryan Teeters and a tractor-trailer owned by MSF Transport, LLC and operated by MSF Transport, LLC's employee Jose Garza. The accident occurred on southbound Interstate 35 at approximately mile marker 118.5 in Story County, Iowa. Menard, Inc. alleges Garza's negligence and Defendants' negligent training and supervision of Garza, caused the December 5, 2018 accident. MSF Transport, LLC denies such negligence and allege Teeters' negligence caused the December 5, 2018 accident.

The parties stipulate that Bryan Teeters was an employee of Menard, Inc. and was acting within the course and scope of his employment with Menard, Inc. at the time of the December 5, 2018 motor vehicle accident. The parties also stipulate that Jose Garza was an employee of MSF Transport, LLC and was acting within the course and scope of his employment with MSF Transport, LLC at the time of the December 5, 2018 motor vehicle accident.

It will be your duty to decide from the evidence which party is entitled to your verdict on the claims. You will be further instructed on the legal elements of the parties' claims at the end of the trial.

Your duty is to decide what the facts are from the evidence. You are allowed to consider the evidence in the light of your own observations and experiences. After you have decided what the facts are, you will have to apply those facts to the law, which I give you in these and in my other instructions. That is how you will reach your verdict. Only you will decide what the facts are. However, you must follow my instructions, whether you agree with them or not. You have taken an oath to follow the law that I give you in my instructions.

In deciding what the facts are, you may have to decide what testimony you believe and what testimony you do not believe. You may believe all of what a witness says, or only part of it, or none of it.

In deciding what testimony to believe, you may consider a witness's intelligence; the opportunity the witness had to see or hear the things testified about; a witness's memory, knowledge, education, and experience; any reasons a witness might have for testifying a certain way; how a witness acted while testifying; whether a witness said something different at another time; whether a witness's testimony sounded reasonable; and whether or to what extent a witness's testimony is consistent with other evidence you believe.

Do not let sympathy, or your own likes or dislikes, influence you. The law requires you to come to a just verdict based only on the evidence, your common sense, and the law that I give you in my instructions, and nothing else.

Nothing I say or do during this trial is meant to suggest what I think of the evidence or what I think your verdict should be.

PRELIMINARY INSTRUCTION NO. 2

When I use the word “evidence,” I mean the testimony of witnesses; documents and other things I admitted as exhibits; facts that I tell you the parties have agreed are true; and any other facts that I tell you to accept as true.

Some things are not evidence. I will now tell you what is not evidence:

1. Lawyers’ statements, arguments, questions, and comments are not evidence.
2. Documents or other things that might be in court or talked about, but that I do not admit as exhibits, are not evidence.
3. Objections are not evidence. Lawyers have a right – and sometimes a duty – to object when they believe something should not be a part of the trial. Do not be influenced one way or the other by objections. If I sustain a lawyer’s objection to a question or an exhibit, that means the law does not allow you to consider that information. When that happens, you have to ignore the question or the exhibit, and you must not try to guess what the information might have been.
4. Testimony and exhibits that I strike from the record, or tell you to disregard, are not evidence, and you must not consider them.
5. Anything you see or hear about this case outside the courtroom is not evidence, and you must not consider it unless I specifically tell you otherwise.

Also, I might tell you that you can consider a piece of evidence for one purpose only, and not for any other purpose. If that happens, I will tell you what purpose you can consider the evidence for and what you are not allowed to consider it for. You need to pay close attention when I give an instruction about evidence that you can consider for only certain purposes, because you might not have that instruction in writing later in the jury room.

Some of you may have heard the terms “direct evidence” and “circumstantial evidence.” You should not be concerned with those terms, since the law makes no distinction between the weight to be given to direct and circumstantial evidence.

PRELIMINARY INSTRUCTION NO. 3

The parties may stipulate - that is, they agree - that certain facts are as counsel state into the record during trial. You should treat those facts as having been proved.

PRELIMINARY INSTRUCTION NO. 4

Certain testimony from a deposition may be read into evidence or shown from a video recording. A deposition is testimony taken under oath before the trial and preserved in writing or on video. Consider that testimony as if it had been given in court. You should not place any significance on the manner or tone of voice used to read the witness's answer to you.

PRELIMINARY INSTRUCTION NO. 5

During the course of the trial, I occasionally may ask questions of a witness or counsel. Do not assume that I hold any opinion on the matters to which my questions may relate. Neither in these instructions nor in any ruling, action, or remark that I make during this trial do I intend to give any opinion or suggestion as to what the facts are or what your verdict should be.

PRELIMINARY INSTRUCTION NO. 6

Throughout the trial, I will sometimes need to talk privately with the lawyers. I may talk with them here at the bench while you are in the courtroom, or I may call a recess and let you leave the courtroom while I talk with the lawyers. Either way, please understand that while you are waiting, we are working. We have these conferences to make sure that the trial is proceeding according to the law and to avoid confusion or mistakes. We will do what we can to limit the number of these conferences and to keep them as short as possible.

PRELIMINARY INSTRUCTION NO. 7

At the end of the trial, you will have to make your decision based on what you recall of the evidence. You will not have a written copy of the testimony to refer to. Because of this, you have to pay close attention to the testimony and other evidence as it is presented here in the courtroom.

If you wish, however, you may take notes to help you remember what witnesses say. If you do take notes, do not show them to anyone until you and your fellow jurors go to the jury room to decide the case after you have heard and seen all of the evidence. And do not let taking notes distract you from paying close attention to the evidence as it is presented. The Clerk will provide each of you with a pad of paper and a pen or pencil. At each recess, leave them on your chair.

When you leave at night, your notes will be secured and not read by anyone. The notes will remain confidential throughout the trial and will be destroyed at the conclusion of the trial.

PRELIMINARY INSTRUCTION NO. 8

Jurors, to make sure this trial is fair to all parties, you must follow these rules:

First, do not talk or communicate among yourselves about this case, or about anyone involved with it, until the end of the case when you go to the jury room to consider your verdict.

Second, do not talk with anyone else about this case, or about anyone involved with it, until the trial has ended, and you have been discharged as jurors.

Third, when you are outside the courtroom, do not let anyone tell you anything about the case, or about anyone involved with it until the trial has ended and your verdict has been accepted by me. If someone tries to talk to you about the case during the trial, please report it to the Clerk or Court Security Officer.

Fourth, during the trial, do not talk with or speak to any of the parties, lawyers, or witnesses in this case – not even to pass the time of day. It is important not only that you do justice in this case, but also that you act accordingly. If a person from one side of the lawsuit sees you talking to a person from the other side – even if it is just about the weather – that might raise a suspicion about your fairness. So, when the lawyers, parties and witnesses do not speak to you in the halls, on the elevator or the like, you must understand that they are not being rude. They know they are not supposed to talk to you while the trial is going on, and they are just following the rules.

Fifth, you may need to tell your family, close friends, and other people that you are a part of this trial. You can tell them when you have to be in court, and you can warn them not to ask you about this case, tell you anything they know or think they know about this case, or talk about this case in front of you. But, you must not communicate with anyone or post information about the parties, witnesses, participants, claims, evidence, or anything else related to this case. You

must not tell anyone anything about the jury's deliberations in this case until after I accept your verdict or until I give you specific permission to do so. If you talk about the case with someone besides the other jurors during deliberations, it looks as if you might already have decided the case or that you might be influenced in your verdict by their opinions. That would not be fair to the parties, and it might result in the verdict being thrown out and the case having to be tried over again. During the trial, while you are in the courthouse and after you leave for the day, do not give any information to anyone, by any means, about this case. For example, do not talk face-to-face or use any electronic device, such as a telephone, cell phone, smart phone, Blackberry, PDA, computer, or computer-like device. Likewise, do not use the Internet or any Internet service; do not text or send instant messages; do not go on an Internet chat room, blog, or use any other social media such as Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, Twitter, or Instagram to communicate anything about the case. In other words, do not communicate with anyone about this case – except for the other jurors during deliberations – until I accept your verdict.

Sixth, do not do any research – on the Internet, in libraries, newspapers, or otherwise – and do not investigate this case on your own. Do not visit or view any place discussed in this case, and do not use the Internet or other means to search for or view any place discussed in the testimony. Also, do not look up any information about this case, the law, or the people involved, including the parties, the witnesses, the lawyers, or the court.

Seventh, do not read any news stories or Internet articles or blogs that are about the case, or about anyone involved with it. Do not listen to any radio or television reports about the case or about anyone involved with it. In fact, until the trial is over I suggest that you avoid reading any newspapers or news journals at all, and avoid listening to any television or radio newscasts at all. I do not know whether there will be news reports about this case, but if there are, you

might accidentally find yourself reading or listening to something about the case. If you want, you can have someone clip out any stories and set them aside to give to you after the trial is over. I can assure you, however, that by the time you have heard all the evidence in this case, you will know what you need to return a just verdict.

The parties have a right to have you decide their case based only on evidence admitted here in court. If you research, investigate, or experiment on your own, or get information from other sources, your verdict might be influenced by inaccurate, incomplete, or misleading information. Witnesses here in court take an oath to tell the truth, and the accuracy of their testimony is tested through cross-examination. All of the parties are entitled to a fair trial and an impartial jury, and you have to conduct yourselves in a way that assures the integrity of the trial process. If you decide a case based on information not admitted in court, you will deny the parties a fair trial. You will deny them justice. Remember, you have taken an oath to follow the rules, and you must do so, whether instructed by the judge or other court personnel. If you do not, the case might have to be retried, and you could be held in contempt of court and possibly punished.

Eighth, immediately report any failure to follow these instructions including any unauthorized use of the Internet or social media to the Clerk or Court Security Officer.

Ninth, do not make up your mind during the trial about what your verdict should be. Keep an open mind until after you and your fellow jurors have discussed all the evidence.

PRELIMINARY INSTRUCTION NO. 9

The trial will proceed in the following manner:

First, Menard's lawyer may make an opening statement. Next, MSF's lawyer may make an opening statement. An opening statement is not evidence, but it is a summary of the evidence the lawyers expect you will see and hear during trial.

After opening statements, Menard will present evidence. MSF's lawyer will have a chance to cross-examine Menard's witnesses. After Menard has finished presenting its case, MSF may present evidence, and Menard's lawyer will have a chance to cross-examine their witnesses.

After you have seen and heard all of the evidence from all sides, the lawyers will make closing arguments that summarize and interpret the evidence. Just as with opening statements, closing arguments are not evidence. After the closing arguments, I will instruct you further on the law, and you will go to the jury room to deliberate and decide on your verdict.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

Dated January 19, 2021.



Helen C. Adams
Chief U.S. Magistrate Judge