



**Katherine M. Steele**

Shareholder  
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Katherine Steele's civil litigation practice has, since 1981, emphasized representing defendants in product liability, construction defect, asbestos and toxic tort, wrongful death, personal injury, general maritime law, Jones Act, insurance coverage and related bankruptcy cases. She represents contractors, owners, engineers, manufacturers, suppliers and other businesses on a broad range of issues.

Katherine is currently the national counsel for a Northwest shipping company. For nearly 20 years, she served as National Asbestos Coordinating Counsel for the former Northwest Manville contractor and distributor, The E.J. Bartells Co. until its successful reorganization in 2001. During that time, Katherine developed and implemented strategy resulting in defense verdicts in 75% of the cases tried, smaller increases in filings, and lower settlement averages than similar asbestos defendants. The plaintiff verdicts all resulted in low verdicts, small fault allocation compared to co-defendants and no punitive awards.

Katherine has substantial experience designing databases to increase efficiency and track cases for clients, including a plaintiff database, an extensive searchable database of nearly all northwest industrial sites, a vessel database with pertinent information on nearly all West Coast naval vessels, and many merchant vessels and a document/exhibit database referencing an extensive exhibit library including most major northwest job sites and trade publications.

**Katherine's experience representing clients in complex civil matters has made her a sought-after speaker on asbestos litigation topics. She has spoken numerous times at various asbestos conferences including DRI's Asbestos Medicine Seminar, Perrin Conferences' Asbestos Litigation Conference, and HarrisMartin's Northwest Asbestos Litigation Conference.**

**Recent Representative Cases**

- Counsel for distributor class representative in the first major asbestos bankruptcy, In re Johns-Manville 982 F.2d. 721. Obtained indemnity payment and rights to future indemnity payments.
- Expert regarding Contractor's Statute of Repose. Obtained Ninth Circuit decision upholding the statute in Oregon. Multnomah County Sch. Dist. 1J v. ACandS, Fibreboard et al., 5 F.3d 1255 (9th Cir. 1993), cert. denied 114 S.Ct. 2742 (1994); 767 F.Supp. 1051 (1991); 139 F.R.D. 164 (1991) (multimillion dollar asbestos property claims dismissed in



Oregon).

- Led discovery and pleading effort leading to dismissal of unimpaired screening cases in Washington. Chaired defense committee which obtained one of the first orders prioritizing cases for trial based upon medical criteria.
- Obtained rulings applying the statute of limitations to much of the damages sought by the state in Washington ex rel actions to recover on the lien for worker's compensation benefits. While limited to Washington, this ruling is striking in that the decision was based upon public policy, not case law.

#### **Practice Areas**

Asbestos Litigation

Construction

Personal & Catastrophic Injury Litigation

Product Liability

#### **Industries**

Food & Beverage

Hospitality

#### **Education**

University of Washington, School of Marine and Environmental Affairs - L.L.M., 1982

Willamette University, College of Law - J.D., 1981

University of Oregon, Robert D. Clark Honors College - B.A., 1978

#### **Bar Admissions**

- Washington, 1981
- Oregon, 2003

#### **Court Admissions**

- U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Washington
- U.S. District Court, Western District of Washington
- U.S. District Court, District of Oregon
- U.S. District Court, Northern District of California
- U.S. Court of Appeals, Second Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals, Third Circuit
- U.S. Court of Appeals, Ninth Circuit

#### **Professional and Civic Involvement**

- American Bar Association (Member)
- Defense Research Institute (Member, Product Liability Committee; Member, Toxic Torts and Environmental Law Committee)
- King County Bar Association (Member)



- Washington Defense Trial Lawyers Association (Member)

**Publications and Presentations**

- Co-Speaker, "Lung Cancer: Preparing for and Cross-Examining Experts," Defense Research Institute (DRI) Asbestos Medicine Seminar (2014)
- Co-Speaker, "Future Trends in Asbestos Litigation: Where Are We Going From Here?," HarrisMartin's Northwest Asbestos Litigation Conference (2014)
- Co-Speaker, "The Evolution of Asbestos Litigation – A Look Ahead to 2013," Perrin Conferences' Litigating Asbestos Cases in Today's Environment (2012)
- Co-Speaker, "Duty to Warn & Recent Rulings on External Insulation/Replacement Parts," Perrin Conferences' Asbestos Litigation Conference (2009)

**Outside Interests**

Katherine lives in Seattle with her husband, Steve. She is an apprentice apiarist and enjoys tending to her hives of honeybees. As an avid cook, Katherine looks forward to creating fun and inventive new recipes. In addition, she is an active purveyor to Seattle restaurants, and she also enjoys sampling local cuisine and specialties when she travels.