



## Carolyn F. O'Connor

Partner

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Madison, NJ – 973.735.5745

Carolyn O'Connor is a member of the firm's Executive Committee and the regional managing partner of the New Jersey office. She focuses her high-energy practice on product liability, talc, asbestos, silica, mold, chemical, high-value fire loss, environmental and premises litigation. Carolyn represents Fortune 100 petrochemical companies, refineries and other industrial and residential premises owners as far away as the U.S. Virgin Islands. In addition, she serves as national coordinating counsel for a gasket manufacturer in asbestos cases and for the toxic tort docket of several petrochemical companies. She also has significant experience defending catastrophic injuries caused by fire, large property losses and underground storage contamination matters. Carolyn provides keen and reliable insights on the liabilities and benefits in fight-or-resolve decisions.

Following on her success as the first chair, now *Chair Emeritus*, of the firm's Pro Bono Committee, Carolyn leads Wilson Elser's Women Attorneys Valued & Empowered (*WAVE*) initiative, which exemplifies the firm's enlightened approach to advancing the professional and personal well-being of its women attorneys. Carolyn's mentorship and dedication on behalf of these programs helped the firm achieve Mansfield 5.0 Certification Plus in 2022 which represents a high point in the firm's history and a source of pride for our attorneys.

### **Toxic Tort**

Carolyn has deep experience in the defense of latent injury cases, including lead poisoning, talc, asbestos, silica and mold and coordinates the defense of these matters across the country. She also has a wide variety of product liability defense experience that includes kerosene heaters, various personal consumer appliances and a wide variety of chemicals, solvents, personal care products, and petrochemical products and byproducts. Carolyn has experience in defending various alleged toxins, including benzene, talc, asbestos, mold, lead, hydrogen sulfide, catalyst, silica, nickel, manganese, welding fumes,

### **Services**

- Asbestos & Talc
- Environmental
- Product Liability, Prevention & Government Compliance
- Toxic Tort

paint and stain products for both the manufacturer and premises owners. She has tried cases before the Superior Court and has argued before both the Appellate Division and Supreme Court in New Jersey on issues of law affecting toxic tort. These issues have included failure to warn, take-home exposure issues, Haz Com compliance and federal preemption issues.

### **Premises Litigation**

Carolyn handles a variety of industrial contamination cases related to her Toxic Tort practice, including liability claims against oil refineries and leaking underground storage tanks.

### **Product Liability**

Carolyn has substantial experience in product liability matters. She has represented designers, manufacturers, suppliers and distributors of products in numerous product liability lawsuits. Carolyn has represented Fortune 100 companies in state and federal court, in trial and at alternate dispute resolution forums throughout the country, with a concentration on the East Coast and the U.S. Virgin Islands. She has also been appointed as national coordinating counsel for several of her clients in addressing risk management issues and compliance with individual corporate needs. Throughout her career, Carolyn has defended a wide variety of product liability matters, having affected the laws regarding product liability via arguments concerning personal jurisdiction, preemption, burden of proof and constitutional protections. Carolyn supervises the New Jersey Product Liability/Toxic Tort practice and has served as chairperson of the New Jersey Defense Association Product Liability Committee.

### **Education**

- Rutgers School of Law (J.D., 1987)
  - with honors
- Gettysburg College (B.A., 1984)
  - summa cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa

### **Bar Admissions**

- New Jersey
- U.S. Virgin Islands

### **Court Admissions**

- Supreme Court of New Jersey
- U.S. Court of Appeals, Third Circuit
- U.S. District Court, District of New Jersey

### **Professional Affiliations**

- American Chemical Society, member

- American Bar Association, Litigation and Tort and Insurance Practice Sections
- New Jersey State Bar Association, Environmental Law Section
- New Jersey Defense Association, Products Liability Committee, past chairperson
- Essex County Bar Association, delegate
- District V Ethics Committee, past member
- National Association of Women Lawyers, member
- National Association of Professional Women, member

### **Awards & Honors**

- Selected for inclusion in *The Best Lawyers in America*®, 2024-2026
- Selected for inclusion in *The Best Lawyers in America*® *Women in Law*, 2025
- Selected for inclusion in *New Jersey Super Lawyers*®, 2015-2024
- Selected for inclusion in *The Best Lawyers in America*™ in Product Liability Litigation – Defendants, 2020-2023
- Trial Attorneys of New Jersey, Trial Bar Award, 2019
- Recognized by *NJBIZ* as one of the "Best 50 Women in Business," 2014
- AV® Preeminent™ Rated by Martindale-Hubbell
- Lawyer *Monthly Magazine's* "Women in Law" award, 2014