

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF
ALABAMA, SOUTHERN DIVISION

Jennifer M. Taylor v. Salem Carriers, Incorporated, et al.

Taylor · No. 2:23-cv-0886-JHE · Decided March 27, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Northern District of Alabama addresses cross-motions for partial summary judgment arising from a motor vehicle accident. The court grants Salem Carriers summary judgment on negligent entrustment and negligent hiring, training, supervision, and retention claims, and grants Taylor summary judgment regarding White’s employment and scope of employment. The court denies White’s motion for summary judgment on Taylor’s wantonness claims, finding factual disputes concerning his conduct before the collision.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Northern District of Alabama, Southern Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	John H. England, III
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Northern District of Alabama, Southern Division
DECIDED	March 27, 2026
DOCKET	2:23-cv-0886-JHE
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Cross-motions for partial summary judgment in a diversity personal-injury action arising from a motor vehicle collision.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 56(a), summary judgment is proper when there is no genuine dispute as to any material fact and the movant is entitled to judgment as a matter of law. Cross-motions are evaluated separately, with the evidence viewed in the light most favorable to the nonmovant on each motion. The court may not weigh evidence or make credibility determinations.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court memorandum opinion; persuasive only

TOPICS

- summary judgment
- negligence
- negligent hiring
- punitive damages

PRACTICE AREAS

torts

civil procedure

motor vehicle liability

employer liability

remedies

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Salem Carriers was entitled to summary judgment on Taylor's negligent entrustment claim.
2. Whether Salem Carriers was entitled to summary judgment on Taylor's negligent hiring, training, supervision, and retention claims.
3. Whether Taylor was entitled to summary judgment establishing that White was Salem Carriers' employee and was acting within the line and scope of his employment.
4. Whether either party was entitled to summary judgment on Taylor's wantonness claim against White.
5. Whether White was entitled to summary judgment on Taylor's potential punitive-damages claim.

HOLDINGS

1. Salem Carriers was entitled to summary judgment because Taylor's evidence of one prior accident, without evidence that White was at fault, and one non-out-of-service equipment-related violation was insufficient to create a genuine issue that White was incompetent to drive or that Salem Carriers knew or should have known of such incompetence.
2. Salem Carriers was entitled to summary judgment on Taylor's negligent hiring, training, supervision, and retention claims because Taylor failed to present evidence from which a jury could reasonably infer that White was incompetent or that Salem Carriers knew or should have known of his alleged incompetence.
3. Taylor was entitled to summary judgment establishing that White was an employee of Salem Carriers and was acting within the line and scope of his employment when the accident occurred.
4. Neither Taylor nor White was entitled to summary judgment on Taylor's wantonness claim against White because conflicting evidence created a genuine dispute of material fact concerning whether White consciously and recklessly accelerated into the intersection or instead attempted to stop and avoid the collision.
5. White was not entitled to summary judgment on Taylor's potential punitive-damages claim because the evidence could permit a reasonable jury to find wantonness by clear and convincing evidence.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Under Rule 56(a) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, summary judgment is proper “if the movant shows that there is no genuine dispute as to any material fact and the movant is entitled to judgment as a matter of law.”” (2)

“Under Alabama law, “wantonness” is “[c]onduct which is carried on with a reckless or conscious disregard for the rights or safety of others.”” (13-14)

“Resolution of these competing accounts necessarily depends on credibility determinations, which are the province of the jury and are not appropriate for resolution at summary judgment.” (16)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

On November 3, 2022, White, an employee of Salem Carriers driving a Salem-leased tractor-trailer, ran a red light at an intersection in Shelby County, Alabama. His tractor-trailer struck another vehicle, which then struck Taylor's vehicle, sending it into a guardrail and causing Taylor injuries. Taylor relied on White's prior employment history, one prior accident, and a non-out-of-service equipment-related violation to support her negligent entrustment and negligent hiring-related claims. The parties presented conflicting testimony concerning whether White applied his brakes or accelerated immediately before the collision.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Taylor sued Jeffery A. White and Salem Carriers under Alabama law for negligence and wantonness arising from a collision. The parties filed cross-motions for partial summary judgment concerning negligent entrustment, negligent hiring, training, supervision and retention, White's wantonness, punitive damages, and whether White acted within the line and scope of his employment. The court granted Salem Carriers' motion on the negligent-entrustment and negligent-hiring-related claims and on claims Taylor conceded, granted Taylor's motion on White's employment and scope of employment, denied Taylor's motion on wantonness, and denied White's motion.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Celotex Corp. v. Catrett, 477 U.S. 317, 322-24 (1986)
- Anderson v. Liberty Lobby, Inc., 477 U.S. 242, 248, 252, 254-55 (1986)
- Adickes v. S.H. Kress & Co., 398 U.S. 144, 157 (1970)
- Pace v. Capobianco, 283 F.3d 1275, 1276-78 (11th Cir. 2002)
- Ellis v. England, 432 F.3d 1321, 1326 (11th Cir. 2005) (per curiam)
- Bald Mtn. Park, Ltd. v. Oliver, 836 F.2d 1560, 1563 (11th Cir. 1989)
- Walker v. Darby, 911 F.2d 1573, 1577 (11th Cir. 1990)
- Askew v. R&L Transfer, Inc., 676 F. Supp. 2d 1298, 1303-04 (M.D. Ala. 2009)
- Prior v. Brown & Root USA, Inc., 674 So. 2d 45, 51-52 (Ala. 1995)
- Halford v. Alamo Rent-A-Car, LLC, 921 So. 2d 409, 413-14 (Ala. 2005)
- Bruck v. Jim Walter Corp., 470 So. 2d 1141, 1144 (Ala. 1985)
- Wallace v. Ebaugh, No. 2:20-CV-02062-KOB, 2022 WL 17672619, at *4-5 (N.D. Ala. 2022)
- Thompson v. Havard, 235 So. 2d 853, 857 (Ala. 1970)
- Broesche v. Bullock, 427 S.W.2d 89, 93 (Tex. Civ. App. 1968)
- Green v. Markovitch, 385 F. Supp. 3d 1190, 1197 (N.D. Ala. 2019)
- Craft, 107 F. Supp. 3d at 1225
- Pritchett v. ICN Medical Alliance, Inc., 938 So. 2d 933, 941 (Ala. 2006)

- Hobbs v. U.S. Xpress, Inc., No. 18-cv-02129-LSC, 2021 WL 913398, at *4 (N.D. Ala. Mar. 10, 2021)
- Stevenson v. Precision Standard, Inc., 762 So. 2d 820, 824 (Ala. 1999)
- Lane v. Central Bank of Alabama, 425 So. 2d 1098, 1100 (Ala. 1983)
- Armstrong Business Services v. AmSouth Bank, 817 So. 2d 665, 682-83 (Ala. 2001)
- Brown, 277 So. 2d at 895
- Sanders v. Shoe Show, Inc., 778 So. 2d 820, 824 (Ala. Civ. App. 2000)
- Tolbert v. Tolbert, 903 So. 2d 103, 114 (Ala. 2004)
- Clark v. Kindley, 10 So. 3d 1005, 1008 (Ala. Civ. App. 2007)
- Alfa Mutual Insurance Co. v. Roush, 723 So. 2d 1250, 1256 (Ala. 1998)
- Bozeman v. Central Bank of the South, 646 So. 2d 601 (Ala. 1994)
- Stone v. Southland National Insurance Corp., 589 So. 2d 1289, 1292 (Ala. 1991)
- Berry v. Fife, 590 So. 2d 884, 885 (Ala. 1991)
- South Central Bell Telephone Co. v. Branum, 568 So. 2d 795, 797 (Ala. 1990)

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