

Castro & Associates

It's a classic example of irony: the UCLA film student who only applied to law school because he lost a bet goes on to become one of the most successful trial attorneys on the West Coast. But that's exactly what happened to Joel B. Castro, managing partner of Castro & Associates. His firm specializes in construction law, and he has won some of the most iconic trials in its field.

He won a \$23 million jury verdict litigating the deepest LA County landfill (100+ feet and a record 10-month trial). He won the first two-way structural slab case in Los Angeles County. He won a multimillion-dollar recovery representing families in the Northridge Meadows collapse case, which killed 16 and injured dozens during the 1994 Northridge earthquake.

This year the California Supreme Court affirmed the multimillion-dollar jury award in *Myrick vs. Mastagni*, the first published case to impose liability for an "unreinforced masonry" building that collapsed during an earthquake and killed occupants. "A 100-year-old building not built to today's strict building codes is not illegal, per se," says Castro. "But this case sent a message to owners of earthquake-prone buildings that just because it's not illegal doesn't mean you won't be held responsible if someone is hurt or injured. If a dog gets loose and hurts someone, the owner is negligent. We took that same logic to the California Supreme Court and came away with a victory. The case sets important public policy that will likely save lives during the next earthquake."



"We never just rely on our experts. We're in the building. We're in the hole, on the roof, under the foundation. We're not afraid of getting dirty. We want to see the evidence for ourselves. Then we record it with photos and videos so the jurors can see exactly what we see."

— Joel B. Castro

The Indiana Jones of Attorneys

Castro & Associates is a medium-sized boutique firm that can boast of many super-sized cases. Castro says one of the keys to his firm's success is its "hands on" investigative approach and failure analysis. "We never just rely on our experts," he says. "We're in the building. We're in the hole, on the roof, under the foundation. We're not afraid of getting dirty. We want to see the evidence for ourselves. Then we record it with photos and videos so the jurors can see exactly what we see."

There's another key to the firm's success: presenting extremely complex construction cases in a manner jurors can understand. "We're very proud of our ability to explain complex construction issues. We do it graphically and in a way that judges and jurors can understand."

But the case Castro recalls as most memorable came about when the State of California tried to demolish the baseball fields used by the Malibu Little League. Castro not only successfully filed suit to stop the destruction but also led a drive to pass legislation that deeded the public land to the Little League organization. "In a courtroom packed with little leaguers, we argued 'fair play,' the same thing we teach on the field," he says. "And in the end, Malibu Little League has the most spectacular fields in the state." How fitting that Castro could bring a major league effort to a little league client. That approach has never changed.



Joel B. Castro



Castro & Associates
 11766 Wilshire Blvd.,
 Suite 250
 Los Angeles, CA 90025
 310-966-6060
www.defectlaw.com