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2014, Panama and the Future of Georgia’s Ports

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Savannah and the Coastal Empire are home to a number of major manufacturers who produce, market and ship high-quality products to customers around the world. State laws typically provide remedies to consumers of products — from construction backhoes to everyday household goods — who find the product they are using is defective. After all, consumers are entitled to safe and high-quality products to customers around the world.

That does not mean consumers are entitled to products that are completely free from danger.

Sometimes a manufacturer's obligations to consumers continue after the sale. For example, a product defect is discovered years later or product advancements are developed that make the product safer and the manufacturer has not yet warned of the danger protected by the new advancement.

The general rule in Georgia is if a manufacturer has actual or constructive knowledge of a danger, it has an obligation to warn consumers accordingly. However, this rule is not absolute and there are case-specific limits to a manufacturer's duty to warn about post-sale discovered dangers and safety advancements.

Take, for example, a 1970s-era automobile built without airbags. Should a manufacturer be responsible for injuries that may have been prevented had the car been built with an airbag? Certainly later model cars have airbags, so why shouldn't the manufacturer be required to recall all cars previously sold and retrofit them with the new technology? This is why the $6 billion in taxes at all levels. Obviously, Savannah profits greatly from all the good work of Ports Authority and related industries.

So, why is 2014 so critical to Ports Authority and Savannah?

The answer: the Panama Canal.

Most Americans do not realize the width and depth of the canal has limited the size of ships passing through to call upon East Coast and Gulf Coast ports. This limit has also set the depth that ports need to handle the ships known as Panamax — the size limited to fit through the canal.

Recognizing the business limitations, the Panama Canal Authority moved the canal in 2009 that should be completed late in 2014. This $5.25 billion project will have a direct impact on shipping to the United States.

The Panamax limitation on ship sizes will become a thing of the past. The new limitation will be the depth of the ports along the East Coast and Gulf Coast. ... Post-Panamax is the future in ocean shipping.

The cost to deepen a port is high. There are monetary, environmental and human factors that have to be balanced.

Recently, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers stated the dollar figure would be approximately $550 million in federal and state funding. Also, they highlighted that additional 6 feet would have minimal environmental impact.

Most people don't realize the Savannah River has been dredged, starting around 1820, from approximately 10 feet to the current 42. So, an additional 6 feet is unlikely to cause significant changes.

It is up to the people and government to decide the future of the port system. Specifically, does Savannah want to continue its unprecedented growth and success in the future?

The Panama Canal is the 2014 driver. Is Savannah going to 48 feet is the question.

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