

Law Firm Exposed for Using AI to Fabricate Court Cases

Alabama's prison system is under fire after its hired law firm, Butler Snow, used AI-generated fake citations in court documents while defending the state in a prisoner safety lawsuit.

The case began when Frankie Johnson, an inmate at the William E. Donaldson prison near Birmingham, filed a lawsuit in 2021. Johnson alleges he was repeatedly stabbed in prison—including a brutal March 2020 attack where he was shackled to a desk and stabbed nine times, and another in November where he was stabbed with an ice pick in the prison yard as officers watched.

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The state of Alabama hired Butler Snow to defend its prison system, but the firm is now facing sanctions after one of its attorneys, Matthew Reeves, admitted to using ChatGPT to generate case citations that turned out to be completely fabricated.

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The AI-created cases were included in legal filings aimed at speeding up Johnson's deposition, despite opposition from his legal team.

Judge Anna Manasco is considering a wide range of penalties against Butler Snow, following the revelation that AI-generated case law was falsely cited in the defense's court filings. Reeves admitted to violating firm policies on AI use, taking full responsibility, and asking the court not to punish his colleagues.

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The incident is part of a growing trend of lawyers submitting AI-generated “hallucinations” in court, with around 100 known cases where courts have caught attorneys using fabricated AI citations.

One Florida lawyer was suspended last year for the same offense, and a California firm was fined \$30,000 for submitting AI-based research in a legal brief.

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As the legal world grapples with AI’s growing influence, this case highlights the urgent need for clear guidelines and ethical standards in using AI tools for legal research.

The shocking use of AI “hallucinations” in a high-stakes legal case has sparked outrage and raised questions about legal ethics in the AI era. Alabama taxpayers now face the prospect of footing the bill for legal blunders that could have serious consequences for both the state and the victims seeking justice.

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