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# What to Do in the Event of an Automobile Accident

If you have been involved in an **automobile accident** and have been injured, the following information applies to you. There are steps you can take on the scene of the accident and in the days and months that follow to **protect yourself legally** and ensure that you get the compensation you deserve.

## On The Scene Of The Accident:

1. **Stay Put.** You should never leave the **scene of an accident**, even a little fender bender. If you leave the scene you could be prosecuted as a hit and run driver. However, if your vehicle is in the lane of travel on an interstate and it is safe to do so, you and the other parties involved should safely move your vehicle to the shoulder of the road and await emergency personnel.
  2. **Assess The Situation.** Look to see if there is damage to any of the **vehicles involved in the accident** and/or the property the accident occurred on. Also check to see if there are any injuries to any drivers or passengers.
  3. **Secure the Scene.** Move yourself and others to a position of safety. Standing on the roadway or sitting in a disabled car may expose you to an even worse accident. If there are injuries, try not to move the **injured person**, giving consideration to all other safety concerns.
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If possible, notify oncoming traffic to proceed with caution by setting out flares, using your hazard warning lights, or raising the hood or trunk of your vehicle.

**4. Call Emergency Services:** Notify police, paramedics, and other emergency services to report the accident and get an ambulance. If you are unable to call, ask somebody else to call. It is very important to seek medical attention for **any injuries** as quickly as possible. If treatment is delayed, the at-fault party may claim that it was something other than his or her negligence that caused your injury. Even **minor injuries** should be addressed quickly, since they can quickly develop into major health problems.

**5. Exchange Information:** You and the other driver(s) involved in the **automobile accident** should exchange the following information:

- Name
- Address
- Phone number
- Drivers license number
- License plate number
- Name of the insurance carrier
- Policy numbers
- Agent's name and telephone number.

Also, be sure to obtain identifying information from any **witnesses to the accident**. Information gathered immediately after the accident will be much more reliable than any recalled at some later date.

**6. Take Notes:** Immediately following the automobile accident you should write down all the details of the incident while they are still fresh in your head. Record the date and time of the accident, location of the accident, year, make and color of all vehicles involved, road

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conditions, speed limits, traffic control devices, weather, lighting, and what the cars were doing at the time of the collision.

7. **Gather Photographic Evidence:** Photograph your injuries and the **damages to your vehicle**. Try to take pictures and document the accident scene and the damage to all the vehicles if it is safe to do so. If you do not have a camera handy remember that a lot of cell phones have cameras built in.

8. **Cooperate with the Police:** When the accident investigator arrives to talk to you, tell them only the facts of what happened, provide accurate information, and do not draw any conclusions. Do not admit responsibility for the accident to the police or anyone else at the site; liability is a **legal matter**. Anything you say to anyone after the crash may be admissible against you in court.

9. **Get Your Incident Number:** Ask the police officer who investigates the scene to provide you with a business card and your “incident number” so that you can **obtain a copy of the accident report**.

10. **Stick Around:** Do not leave the scene of the accident until the police tell you that you can leave.

## **After The Accident:**

1. **Get Your Incident Report:** Obtain a copy of your report in the days immediately following the accident and make sure what it written on it matches your recollection.

2. **See A Physician:** As soon as possible after the accident, if you believe you have been injured, consult a physician and document any pain that you may experience. **Persons injured in an automobile, car, motor vehicle, ATV, 4-Wheeler (Quad), 3-Wheeler (Trike), aircraft, airplane, boat, jet ski, motorcycle, sport**

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## **bike, dirt bike, bicycle, truck or commercial vehicle accident**

can suffer injuries ranging from soft tissue injuries, including a sprain, strain, whiplash, bruise, abrasion, scarring or disfigurement, to more serious catastrophic injuries, broken bones, spinal injuries, concussions, paralysis, traumatic brain injury (TBI) or death.

Not all injuries present themselves immediately following an accident, and some minor injuries worsen, so it is important to see a doctor at the slightest hint of an injury. The longer you wait for medical treatment, the more serious your injuries could become and the more difficult it will be to **connect the injuries to the accident**.

Failure to go to an emergency room after an accident may limit your PIP/No-Fault insurance coverage benefit. In addition, an insurance company may argue that the failure of an individual to see a doctor right away indicates that an injury must have resulted from an unrelated event after the accident. Be sure to report any memory loss, headaches, blood or fluid in your ear, dizziness, ringing in your ears, disorientation, nausea, or confusion.

**3. Keep A Medical Record:** Keep an ongoing daily diary along with photographs (if applicable) describing and documenting any pain, suffering or **injuries that are a result of the accident**. Include in your notes a record of how your injuries are affecting you or your family. When keeping these notes keep in mind that you may be required to share your notes and photographs if you end up in litigation related to the accident.

**4. Document Your Losses:** Be careful to document all losses related to your accident, including:

- Medical bills
  - Transportation costs related to the injuries
  - Future medical treatment
  - Lost wages
  - Estimates of future loss of earnings
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- The effect on your family
  - The effect on your life.

5. **Protect Your Interests:** If you have not yet **contacted an attorney**, you should contact the **Law Office of Scott M. Patterson, LLC** as soon as possible to help you make an injury claim or deal with your insurance issues. It is important that you obtain legal advice before filling out any insurance documents, giving recorded statements to any insurance company, or meeting with an insurance company representative. It is especially important to **consult an attorney** before giving a statement to the other driver's insurance company. Do not sign any check or document from any insurance company without first consulting with a personal injury attorney.

6. **Act Quickly:** There are time limitations (statutes of limitations) involved with filing an insurance claim. As a result, it is important to quickly contact a lawyer with any questions or issues. An **experienced personal injury accident attorney** will help determine your entitlement to medical benefits and other compensation. It is important to begin the investigation, identify witnesses, record their statements, and to identify and preserve all physical evidence as soon as possible.

If you or a loved one has been the **victim of a vehicular accident**, please call **The Law Office of Scott M. Patterson, LLC at (770) 422-8840**. All drivers should know what to do in the event of an accident so be sure to share this information with the people you care about.

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