

A Quick Guide of What to Do After An Automobile Accident

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1. Call Emergency Personnel

Call the police and paramedics if necessary. When the police arrive, be sure to give them all of the information that you have collected. Also, be very precise in your description of the accident to them. The officer will be recording your comments and they will come into play in your case. It is imperative that the police report is precise. Make sure that the officer has written down your statements correctly.

2. Get Witnesses

Obtain the names and addresses of all witnesses right away. They may need to leave the scene and go about their business. Get names, addresses, telephone numbers, license plate numbers, driver's license numbers...everything you can on the witnesses as sometimes they move and must be tracked down later.

3. Preserve Evidence

If you have a disposable camera in your car, which you should, photograph the accident scene and all vehicles involved.

4. Exchange Information

Exchange information with the other driver(s) including names, addresses, work and home telephone numbers, driver's license numbers, make, model and year of each car involved, vehicle plate numbers and insurance company names and policy numbers. Note the number of passengers in the other car, to prevent unscrupulous people from "adding" passengers after the accident.

5. Make Your Own Notes of What Happened

Make a notation for your records of how the accident occurred. Be sure to note the date and time of the accident, names of streets involved, speeds of vehicles and weather conditions. Your memory after the accident is always the most fresh, so don't delay in writing everything down so you can refer to it later.

6. Don't Admit Fault

Accidents can be complicated. Most people are not familiar with the California Vehicle Code, and don't rightfully know if they are at fault or not. Therefore, never admit fault for the accident at the accident scene. It's okay to express concern about what happened and render aid to anyone that is hurt, but don't admit liability.

7. Contact Your Insurance Company

Contact your insurance company and report the accident to them right away. Most policies require you to do so or suffer a loss in coverage. Do not, however, provide any written or recorded statements to any insurance company (including the other driver's carrier) without first consulting an attorney!

8. Contact a Lawyer

You should not delay in speaking with a lawyer after an accident, no matter how minor the accident may be. A successful case must be investigated immediately. Evidence must be preserved. Additionally, the law provides certain time limitations in which action must be taken. If the required action is not taken within that time, your case will be lost forever!

9. Get Medical Attention

If you have any physical complaints after the accident, you should seek medical attention right away. Any delay in seeking medical care can negatively effect your case. An emergency room can provide an immediate evaluation and diagnostic tests such as x-rays. Alternatively, see your family doctor. Either way, be sure to tell any medical personnel all of the physical complaints you are having. Don't leave any complaints unmentioned, even if they are minor! Also be sure to photograph any visible injuries immediately, such as bruises, scrapes, broken bones, etc. Always remember that a picture is worth a thousand words!