Evidence After a Car Crash: Police Reports and Dashcam Video

Evidence from a car crash starts to disappear within hours. Cars are towed and repaired, video gets recorded over and witnesses become harder to find. A car accident attorney typically starts with the police report and any photos or video, then the data stored in the vehicles. This article explains how each source fits into a claim.

The crash report

Officers who respond to a crash usually prepare a crash report, often called a police report. It typically lists the drivers and vehicles involved, with insurance details for each, along with a diagram, a short narrative and any citations issued. In many states, drivers must also report crashes involving injury, death or property damage above a set dollar amount. Copies are usually available from the agency that responded, whether that is a city police department, a sheriff's office or the state highway patrol, often for a small fee.

Insurers rely heavily on the crash report, but it does not decide fault. States differ on whether an officer's opinions can be used at trial. When a report has a factual error, such as a wrong plate number, the agency may accept a request to correct or supplement it. An auto accident attorney will check the report against the photos and statements.

Dashcam video and photographs

Dashcam video can show the moments before a crash more clearly than any witness. Keep the original file with its timestamp, rather than a phone recording of the screen, and store a backup copy. Traffic cameras and nearby businesses may also have recorded the crash, though many systems record over footage within days or weeks. Scene photos can show where the vehicles stopped and the debris and skid marks around them, and photos of injuries taken over several weeks can show how they changed.

The car's own black box

Many passenger vehicles have an event data recorder (EDR). NHTSA describes an EDR as a device that records technical vehicle and occupant information for a brief period, seconds rather than minutes, around the time of a crash. Depending on the vehicle, the data may include speed and brake application as well as seat belt use. NHTSA's rule in 49 CFR Part 563 sets requirements for EDRs in light vehicles that have them. Under the Driver Privacy Act of 2015, EDR data generally belongs to the vehicle owner or lessee, *car accident lawyer* and access by others is limited to situations such as owner consent or a court order.

EDR data can be lost when a car is repaired or sold for salvage. Total loss vehicles are often moved to salvage auctions within weeks, so a car accident attorney may send a preservation letter asking the insurer or tow yard to hold the vehicle until the data can be downloaded.

Witnesses and medical records

Witnesses with no stake in the claim often carry weight. Their names and phone numbers should be collected at the scene if it is safe to https://caraccidentlawyers.wiki/directory/metro-atlanta-law-firms/ do so. Medical records link the injuries to the crash, and gaps in treatment are often used by insurers to dispute a claim. A simple file with the claim number and a log of every call with the adjuster makes later questions

easier to answer. Pain levels, missed work and appointments are worth noting in a journal while the details are fresh. This is general information rather than legal advice, and it does not predict the result of any claim.