Police Reports, Dashcam Video and Car Accident Evidence

The evidence in a car crash claim starts to scatter within hours. Cars are towed and repaired, video is overwritten and witnesses become harder to find. A car accident lawyer usually looks first at the police report and any photos or video, then the data stored in the vehicles. Here is how each source fits into a claim.

The crash report

Officers who respond to a crash usually prepare a crash report, sometimes 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 **car accident lawyer** involving injury, death or property damage caraccidentlawyers.wiki above a set dollar amount. Copies are usually available from the agency that responded, such as 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. If the report contains a factual error, such as a wrong plate number, the agency may accept a request for a correction or a supplement. A car crash attorney will check the report against the photos and statements.

Photos and dashcam footage

Dashcam video can show the moments before a crash better than a witness can. Save the original file with its date and time stamp, rather than a phone recording of the screen, and store a backup copy. Nearby businesses, buses and traffic cameras may have recorded the crash too, but many systems overwrite footage within days or weeks. Photos taken at the scene show vehicle positions, debris, skid marks and road signs, while photos of injuries taken over several weeks can document healing.

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, measured in seconds, not 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, and access by others is limited to situations such as owner consent or a court order.

EDR data can be lost if the car is repaired or crushed. Insurers often move a total loss vehicle to a salvage auction quickly, so an automobile accident attorney may send a preservation letter asking the insurer or tow yard to hold the vehicle until the data is downloaded.

Witnesses and medical records

Witnesses with no stake in the claim often carry weight. Collect their names and phone numbers at the scene when it is safe. 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. A short journal of pain levels and missed work, written while the details are fresh, can also help. This article is general information, not legal advice, and it does not predict the result of any claim.