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# INKELAAR LAW

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*justice you deserve*

## **Get the Justice You Deserve: First Steps to Take if You've Been Injured in a Car Accident**

It can happen to any of us. You're on your way to work, paying attention to the road and driving safely. The light at the intersection you drive through every day turns to green. You begin to pull out only to be slammed in the side by another car whose driver didn't see the light change. Fortunately no one is killed, but your car is totaled and you've got a laundry-list of nagging or serious injuries that will critically impact your life—perhaps permanently. Unfortunately, this scene is all too familiar for numerous people throughout the United States. According to the CDC, there were nearly 2.5 million nonfatal motor vehicle injuries in the US in 2013. And the legal process that follows such injuries is often so complicated and contentious that it will leave you feeling victimized all over again.

So what do you do when you're injured in a car accident? How do you get the justice you deserve and the financial compensation you need to cover your burden?

In order to protect yourself and ensure that you are fairly taken care of, it is essential that you follow these steps if you are ever injured in a car accident.

### **1- Tend to your health and call the authorities**

First thing's first in a crash: tend to your injuries. Call 911 if you need an ambulance and always be sure to call the police. You can begin to think about legal matters once you are certain you are in no further immediate danger.

### **2- Utilize the police**

The police are there to help document what happened and can provide you with ammunition for any future legal battles pertaining to your accident. Ask that the police file a report of the incident and be sure to take note of the names and badge numbers of all responding officers. You are entitled to receive a copy of the police report after the incident and, though it may not always be admissible in civil court, it can provide you with leverage in settlement negotiations such as dates, times, weather conditions, and a preliminary assessment of fault. It may also contain witness statements and contact info making police reports very useful for tracking down witnesses to the accident after the fact—which brings us to the next point...

### **3- Document witness accounts and contact information**

The more witnesses you have that can corroborate your side of the story, the better. Speak to anyone who saw the accident and write down their detailed accounts. Written testimony of uninvolved parties can be extremely important for you and your attorney to use later. Make sure you get the name, phone number, and preferably address for each witness. Later, contact each witness to verify that the contact information you have is correct since your lawyer may need to communicate with them later.

### **4- Take photos of the scene of the accident**

You've heard the saying, "A picture is worth a thousand words," and it certainly applies here. Use your smartphone or any camera available to document every angle of the accident, including your car, the other driver's car, and anything about the environment around you that may have played into the accident. Your goal is to document any evidence of cause or fault such as where your car landed in relation to the other vehicle or the skid marks in the road from where the offending car attempted to brake. It is better to take too many photos than not enough so click away!

### **5- Call a lawyer**

Now that you've done all you can at the scene of the accident, it's time to get in contact with an attorney. If you have been injured in a car accident it is extremely important that you have an experienced professional to guide you through the legal process and fight for your rights and compensation. No one should have to face the stress and pain of a crash's aftermath alone. A personal injury attorney like Thomas Inkelaar will help you bear the burden and ensure you receive a just and fair outcome.

### **6- Record your own account of the accident**

The aftermath of a crash in which you've been injured can be not only confusing, but terrifying. You've been through a trauma and you may be dazed or in serious pain. However, it is incredibly important that you write down your detailed recollection of what happened as soon as possible after the accident. The longer you wait the less details you will remember, and a small detail can make all the difference in winning your personal injury claim. No detail is too insignificant to include. Record everything you remember about the accident exactly as it happened. Include everything that occurred leading up to the crash, during the crash, and after. Below are some of the things you should incorporate in your report:

- Times
- Dates
- Weather conditions
- Names of those present
- Anything that was said

- How you felt or what you thought at the time
- Extent of your injuries/where you feel any pain
- Anything else you think could be relevant

As a general rule, be sure to refer to your lawyer to see if there is anything you might be forgetting. This is not the last you'll be writing about your accident and your attorney can help point you in the right direction when it comes to figuring out what to document.

## **7- Photograph your injuries**

As soon as possible after your accident you should also take photographs of any injuries you have. Continue to take photos as the the injury progresses and keep track of any changes or developments. This pictorial evidence will help to corroborate some of the information that you will document in step 8.

## **8- Thoroughly document the aftermath**

When you are injured in a crash the aftermath can be overwhelming, but it's important that you continue to keep detailed notes on everything that occurs relating to your accident. In particular, write down all developments with regard to the medical treatment of your injuries. If you go in for a check-up or treatment write down the date, time, and location as well as your doctors' names, anything they said about the injury, and most importantly, the cost. Furthermore, it's essential that you also include how the injury is affecting your everyday life. Did your doctor's appointment make you miss work? Write it down. Are you unable to take a vacation you had planned because of your injury? Write it down. Is your injury causing you emotional trauma or affecting your personal relationships? Write it down. It may feel like overkill sometimes, but a thoroughly detailed record of the aftermath of your injury can do wonders for strengthening your legal position.

## **9- Document the insurance claims process**

By now you're probably sensing a theme. Document everything! As with steps 6 and 8, write down any and all relevant details about the interactions you have with insurance companies throughout the claims process. Insurance claims can be notoriously convoluted and frustrating, but by maintaining a record of every interaction you can help the process move more efficiently and add more weight to your personal injury claim.

An injury you receive from a motor vehicle accident may be one of the biggest challenges you will ever have to face. Nonetheless, if you follow the steps above and seek out an experienced personal injury attorney to guide you, you can ensure that you will receive justice and fair compensation for the emotional and financial toil that you have endured. Inkelaar Law has devoted decades to helping victims of serious personal injuries and we understand the burden and stress that these victims face. We want to make sure that you don't face it alone. Give us a call at 1-877-537-4665 and let us fight for the justice you deserve.