Police Reports, Dashcam Video and Car Crash Evidence

Evidence from a car crash starts to disappear within hours. Vehicles get towed and repaired, video gets recorded over and witnesses become hard to reach. A car accident lawyer typically starts with the police report, photos, video and 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. Many states also require drivers to report crashes that involve injury, death or property damage above a set 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, sometimes for a fee.

Insurers rely heavily on the crash report, but it does not decide fault. Rules on using an officer's opinions at trial vary by state. 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. An auto accident attorney will check the report against the photos and statements.

Photos and dashcam footage

Dashcam footage can capture the seconds before a crash more clearly than any witness. Keep the original file with its timestamp, instead of a phone recording of the screen, and make a backup copy. Nearby businesses, buses and traffic cameras may have recorded the crash too, 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.

What the vehicle itself recorded

Many cars and light trucks carry 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, car accident lawyer 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 others may access it only in limited situations, such as with the owner's consent or a court order.

EDR data can be lost when a car is repaired or sold for salvage. Insurers often move a total loss vehicle to a salvage auction quickly, so a car 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

Independent witnesses carry weight because they have no stake in the claim. Collect their names and phone numbers at the scene when it is safe. Medical records connect the injuries to the crash, and gaps in treatment are often **car crash lawyer** 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.