How Crash Reports and Dashcam Video Shape a Car Accident Claim

The evidence in a car crash claim starts to scatter within hours. Cars are towed and repaired, video gets recorded over and witnesses become harder to find. An auto accident lawyer typically starts with the police report, photos, video and the data stored in the vehicles. Here is how each source fits into a claim.

What the police report contains

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. 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.

A crash report is influential in insurance claims, but it is not the final word on 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 https://caraccidentlawyers.wiki/directory/metro-atlanta-law-firms/ a request for a correction or a supplement. An auto accident attorney will compare the report with 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. 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.

The event data recorder

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, seconds rather than minutes, around the time of a crash. Depending on the vehicle, it may record speed and braking, along with 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 **car accident lawyer** 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 that the vehicle be held until the data can be 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 used by insurers to dispute a claim. Keeping the claim number in one place, with a log of each call to 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 is general information rather than legal advice, and no result can be predicted from it.