How Crash Reports and Dashcam Video Shape an Auto 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 hard to reach. A car accident attorney usually looks first at 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, and it often includes a diagram, a short narrative and any citations. 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, 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 is not the final word on fault. Rules on using an officer's opinions at trial vary by state. When a report has a factual error, such as a wrong plate number, the agency may accept a request to correct or supplement it. A car accident lawyer will compare the report with the photos and statements.

Photos and dashcam footage

Dashcam footage can capture the seconds before a crash more clearly than any witness. caraccidentlawyers.wiki Save the original file with its date and time stamp, instead of 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 car's own black box

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, not 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 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 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 ***car accident lawyer*** 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.