How Crash Reports and Dashcam Video Shape a https://caraccidentlawyers.wiki/directory/metro-atlanta-law-firms/ Car Accident Claim

The evidence in a car crash claim starts to scatter within hours. Cars are towed and repaired, video is overwritten 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.

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. In many states, drivers must also report crashes involving injury, death or property damage above a set dollar amount. Copies usually come from the responding agency, 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. 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.

Dashcam video and photographs

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 store a backup copy. Traffic cameras and nearby businesses may also have recorded the crash, 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, while photos of injuries taken over several weeks can document healing.

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, seconds rather than minutes, surrounding 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 when a car is repaired or sold for salvage. Insurers often move a total loss vehicle to a salvage auction quickly, so a motor vehicle accident lawyer may send a preservation letter asking the insurer or tow yard to hold the vehicle until the data is downloaded.

Witness statements and medical records

Witnesses with no stake in the claim often carry weight. Their names and phone numbers should be collected at the scene if it is safe to do so. Medical records link the injuries to the crash, and insurers often point to gaps in treatment 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. 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 no result can be predicted from it.