What to Do at the Scene of a Car Accident in Newark

Being in a car accident is disorienting and often frightening. Even a minor collision can leave you unsure of what to do next, especially if you are injured. The moments right after a crash are critical, not just for your health but also for any future claim you might make. Knowing what to check and what steps to take can help you stay calm and protect your rights.

This guide covers the key points to go through at the scene, with a practical reason for each one. It is written for drivers in the Newark area, but the steps apply wherever you are in California. Your safety and well-being come first, so always prioritise getting medical attention when you need it.

Check Yourself and Others for Injuries

The first thing to do is assess whether you or anyone else in the vehicle is hurt. Adrenaline can mask pain, so take a moment to scan your body for any discomfort, stiffness, or visible wounds. If you feel anything beyond a minor ache, do not try to move. Stay still and call for help. The same goes for passengers. Ask them how they feel and watch for signs of shock, such as confusion or shivering. Never assume an injury is too small to matter. Some injuries, like whiplash or internal bleeding, may not show symptoms right away.

Move to Safety if You Can

If your car is in a dangerous position, such as blocking traffic or sitting in the middle of an intersection, and you are able to move it safely, pull to the shoulder or a nearby parking lot. Turn on your hazard lights to warn other drivers. If you cannot move the vehicle, or if you are injured, stay inside with your seatbelt on and wait for help. Exiting the car on a busy road can be more dangerous than staying put. In some cases, turning off the engine can reduce the risk of fire or fuel leaks.

View the location on Google Maps

The Jagroop Law Office, Inc. is also on Twitter.

Call Emergency Services

In California, you should call 911 for any accident that involves injuries, significant property damage, or a dispute between drivers. Even if the crash seems minor, a police report can be valuable later. The responding officers will document the scene, take statements, and note any visible injuries. That report becomes an official record your insurance company and any legal

representative will rely on. When you speak with the dispatcher, give a clear location and describe any injuries you or others have. Do not try to downplay what happened. Let the professionals decide what level of response is needed.

Exchange Information with the Other Driver

Once the scene is safe and help is on the way, exchange details with the other driver. You will need their full name, phone number, address, driver's license number, and insurance company and policy number. Also note the make, model, and license plate of their vehicle. It is a good idea to write this down or take a photo of their insurance card. Do not discuss fault or blame at this point. Even a casual comment like "I didn't see you" can be used against you later. Stick to exchanging facts and waiting for the police to handle the rest.

Gather Witness Details

If anyone saw the crash, ask for their name and contact information. Witnesses can provide an unbiased account of what happened, which is especially helpful if the other driver gives a different version of events. Look around for people who might have been walking nearby, sitting in a parked car, or working in a storefront. If you are unable to approach them, ask the police officer to take their details. A witness statement can make a big difference when insurance companies or lawyers review the case.

Take Photographs of the Scene

Use your phone to take clear photographs of everything relevant. That includes the position of both vehicles, damage to each car, the road conditions, any skid marks, traffic signs or signals, and the surrounding area. Wide shots help show the context, while close-ups capture specific damage. Photographs are objective evidence. They preserve details that might fade from memory or be disputed later. If you are injured and cannot take photos yourself, ask a passenger or a passerby to help. Even a few images can be more useful than a long written description.

Seek Medical Assessment Promptly

Even if you feel fine, it is wise to see a doctor or visit an urgent care center soon after the accident. Some injuries, such as concussions or soft tissue damage, take hours or days to become noticeable. A medical assessment creates a record linking your injuries to the crash. That record is essential if you need to file a claim or pursue compensation. Keep all paperwork, including emergency room reports, doctor's notes, and prescription receipts. If your symptoms worsen later, that documentation will back up your account.

Notify Your Insurance Company

Call your insurance provider as soon as you can after the accident. Most policies require you to report crashes within a reasonable period, often within 24 hours. Give them the facts as you know them: the time, location, and the other driver's information. Do not guess about what happened or admit fault. Insurance adjusters will investigate the scene and the police report to determine liability. If you have a copy of the police report, share it with them. The sooner you report, the sooner the claims process can start.

When you are injured and dealing with the aftermath of a crash, the practical steps can feel overwhelming. That is why many people look for legal help after a crash. An attorney who handles personal injury cases can explain what to do next, help you gather the right evidence, and communicate with insurance companies on your behalf. They can also advise you on what not to say, which is just as important.

Keep a Personal Record

Write down everything you remember about the accident as soon as you can. Include the date, time, weather conditions, road layout, and the sequence of events leading up to the crash. Your memory will fade over time, and small details that seem unimportant now could matter later. Also keep a journal of your recovery: how you feel each day, any pain or limitations, and how the injuries affect your work or daily life. This log can be persuasive evidence if your case goes to court or if the insurance company questions the severity of your injuries.

Know Your Rights and Options

California law gives you the right to seek compensation for medical bills, lost wages, property damage, and pain and suffering after an accident caused by someone else's negligence. But the legal process involves deadlines, forms, and rules that are easy to miss when you are recovering. A lawyer can explain the statute of limitations for your case, which is typically two years from the date of the accident for personal injury claims. They can also help you evaluate settlement offers and decide whether to accept or negotiate further. If you are unsure about your next steps, seeking legal help after a crash can give you clarity.

If you have been injured in a car accident in or around Newark, you can speak with a legal professional to review your situation. The Jagroop Law Office, Inc., located at 39899 Balentine Dr #200, Newark, CA 94560, USA, offers free initial consultations and can be reached at +1 510-491-0885.