Evidence After a Car Accident: Police Reports and Dashcam Video

Evidence from a car crash starts to disappear within hours. Cars are towed and repaired, video gets recorded over and witnesses become harder to find. A car accident lawyer usually looks first at the police report, photos, video and the data stored in the vehicles. This article explains how each source fits into a claim.

The police report

Officers who respond to a crash usually prepare a crash report, often called a police report. It usually records who was driving each vehicle and which insurer covers it, 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, whether that is 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 does not decide fault. States differ on whether an *caraccidentlawyers.wiki* 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 compare the report with the photos and statements.

Dashcam video and photographs

Dashcam video can show the moments before a crash better than a witness can. 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, but many systems overwrite 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 passenger vehicles have 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 *car accident lawyer* 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. Total loss vehicles are often moved to salvage auctions within weeks, 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.

Witnesses and medical records

Witnesses with no stake in the claim often carry weight. Collect their names and phone numbers at the scene when it is safe. 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. A short journal of pain levels and missed work, written while the details are fresh, can also help. This article is general information, not legal advice, and it does not predict the result of any claim.