Steps to Take Right After a Car Accident in Newark

Stay Calm and Check for Injuries

The moments after a car accident can be disorienting. Your heart pounds, your mind races, and it is easy to forget basic steps. The most important thing is to stay as calm as you can. Take a slow breath and check yourself and your passengers for injuries. If anyone is hurt, call 911 immediately. Even if injuries seem minor, it is better to let emergency medical personnel assess everyone at the scene. Do not move anyone who is seriously injured unless there is an immediate danger like a fire or leaking fuel. Let trained responders handle that.

Move to Safety if Possible

If the vehicles are drivable and the accident is minor, pull them to the side of the road or a nearby parking lot. Turn on your hazard lights to warn other drivers. If you cannot move the cars, or if it is unsafe to do so, leave them where they are and stay inside your vehicle with your seatbelt on until help arrives. On a busy highway, getting out of the car can be more dangerous than staying put. Use your judgment based on the location and traffic conditions.

Call the Police

Even for a fender bender, it is wise to call the police. A police officer will come to the scene, document what happened, and write a report. That report can be crucial later when you file an insurance claim or if there is a dispute about fault. Give the officer a clear, factual account of what you saw. Stick to what you know, not what you guess. Do not admit fault or apologize for the accident. Saying “I’m sorry” can be misconstrued as an admission of responsibility. Let the facts speak for themselves.

Exchange Information with the Other Driver

While waiting for the police, exchange information with the other driver. Get their full name, phone number, address, driver’s license number, and insurance details. Write down the make, model, and license plate of their vehicle. If there are other passengers in that car, note their names as well. Do not discuss who was at fault or argue about what happened. Stay civil and keep the conversation limited to exchanging data. If the other driver is agitated or aggressive, stay in your car with the doors locked until the police arrive.

View the location on Google Maps

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

Gather Evidence at the Scene

If it is safe, take photographs and video of the accident scene from multiple angles. Capture the positions of the vehicles, any damage, skid marks on the road, traffic signs, and the surrounding area. A picture of the other driver's license plate is helpful. Also photograph any visible injuries. This visual record can be very persuasive when dealing with insurance companies or a car accident lawyer later. Write down the time, date, weather conditions, and road conditions. If there are witnesses, get their names and contact information. They may remember something you missed.

Seek Medical Attention

Even if you feel fine immediately after the crash, see a doctor or visit an urgent care clinic within 24 hours. Some injuries, like whiplash or internal bruising, take hours or days to show symptoms. A medical evaluation creates a baseline record of your condition. If you later develop pain or complications, that record connects the injury to the accident. Keep copies of all medical reports and bills. Do not skip this step just because you feel okay at the scene. Your health matters more than any paperwork.

Notify Your Insurance Company

Contact your insurance provider as soon as possible after the accident. Most policies require you to report a collision within a reasonable time frame, often within 24 to 48 hours. Give them the facts: the date, location, and a brief description of what happened. Share the police report number and the other driver's information. Do not exaggerate or downplay the damage. Stick to the truth. Your insurance adjuster will guide you through the claims process and tell you what they need from you. Ask them about your coverage limits and deductible.

Keep a File of Everything

Create a dedicated folder, physical or digital, for all accident-related documents. Include the police report, insurance correspondence, medical records, repair estimates, and any receipts for expenses like a rental car or towing. Write down your own recollection of the accident while it is still fresh. Keep a log of phone calls: who you spoke to, when, and what was said. This organized record will help you, your insurance company, and any legal professional you consult later.

Consider Legal Advice Early

Not every accident requires a lawyer. If the damage is minor and there are no injuries, you may be able to handle the claim on your own. But if someone was hurt, if fault is disputed, or if the

insurance company is not offering a fair settlement, it makes sense to talk to a car accident lawyer. A consultation often costs nothing upfront. An experienced attorney can review your case, explain your rights, and advise you on whether to pursue a claim or negotiate with the insurance company. They can also help you understand the statute of limitations in your state, which is the deadline for filing a lawsuit. In California, that deadline is generally two years from the date of the accident for personal injury claims.

Speaking with a car accident lawyer early can also prevent you from making mistakes that harm your case. For example, you might accidentally say something to an insurance adjuster that undermines your claim. A lawyer can handle communication with the insurance company on your behalf, letting you focus on recovery. They can also help you calculate the full value of your damages, including future medical costs, lost wages, and pain and suffering. Many people underestimate what they are entitled to, especially when injuries have long-term effects.

Beware of Quick Settlement Offers

Insurance companies sometimes offer a quick settlement soon after an accident, especially if injuries are not obvious. Accepting that offer may close your case permanently. If you later discover that your injury is more serious than you thought, you cannot go back and ask for more money. Do not sign anything or accept a settlement until you understand the full extent of your injuries and the costs involved. A lawyer can review any settlement offer and tell you whether it is fair.

Take Care of Your Mental Health

Car accidents can be traumatic. You may feel anxious about driving, have trouble sleeping, or replay the crash in your mind. These reactions are normal. If they persist, consider talking to a counselor or therapist. Your mental well-being is part of your overall recovery. Do not ignore it. Some insurance policies cover mental health treatment after an accident, so ask your provider. Keeping a journal about how you are feeling can also help you track your emotional recovery.

Reach Out to a Local Law Firm

If you decide that legal guidance would help, consider contacting a local law firm that handles personal injury cases. The Jagroop Law Office, Inc. is located at 39899 Balentine Dr #200, Newark, CA 94560, USA, and can be reached at +1 510-491-0885 for a free initial consultation.