Fast Facts 16

Vehicle Collisions

Have You Been Involved in a Vehicle Collision?

Vehicle collisions can be traumatic. So much is happening, and you may not know what you need to do. Keep this pamphlet in your vehicle just in case you find yourself in a vehicle collision.

Were You Wearing Seat Belts?

Most drivers, no matter how carefully they drive, will be involved in at least one vehicle collision during their lifetime. Your chances of being injured or killed in a vehicle collision are greater than you might think. One person in three will be injured or killed. To increase your chances of surviving a collision, use your seat belts every time you are in a moving vehicle. Be sure you and your passengers wear both your lap and shoulder belt if the vehicle is equipped with both, even if the vehicle is equipped with air bags. Wear your seat belts every time you drive. It is the law!

Children 8 years old and older, but under 16 years old, must be properly secured with an appropriate safety belt. Children under 8 years old, who are less than 4 feet 9 inches tall, must be properly secured in a child passenger restraint system that meets federal safety standards. However, children under 8 years old, who are 4 feet 9 inches tall or taller, may be secured with an appropriate safety belt.

Here are some additional tips for using a child passenger restraint system:

- The back seat is the safest place in the car for children 12 years old or younger.
- Children who weigh up to 40 pounds and up to age two must be secured in a child passenger restraint system secured to the back seat facing the rear of the car. To get help from your local Child Protective Services (CPS) programs, use the Child Car Seat Inspection Station Locator link at **nhtsa.gov/cps/cpsfitting/index.cfm**. Please refer to the *California Driver Handbook* for more information regarding child restraint systems.

Common Causes of Vehicle Collisions

Some of the common causes of vehicle collisions are:

- Unsafe speed.
- Driver distractions.
- Driving on the wrong side of the road.
- Improper turns.
- Violation of the right-of-way rules.
- Violation of stop signals and signs.
- Cellular telephone use.

Choosing a Traffic Lane

When news stations report vehicle collisions, they refer to numbered traffic lanes. The left lane is the number 1 lane. The lane to the right of the number 1 lane is the number 2 lane, then the number 3 lane, etc.

If you are aware of a vehicle collision, avoid driving near the collision or take another route, if possible. If you must drive near a collision scene, do not slow down or stop to look—you could cause another collision. Drive carefully and watch for people in the road. Always obey an order from a law enforcement officer or firefighter directing traffic at a vehicle collision scene, even if you must ignore normal traffic laws or signs to do so.

When You See a Vehicle Collision

- If you are the first person at a vehicle collision scene, pull completely off the road, away from the collision. Emergency personnel must be able to see the collision and stop next to it for easy access to injured persons.
  - — Check to see if anyone is injured. Search the area for victims who may have been thrown from a vehicle. They may be hidden in grass or bushes.
- Call 911. If another person stops to help, ask that person to call 911.
  - — The person calling 911 must be ready to answer questions and provide information, such as the location of the emergency (cross streets, freeway on/off ramp information) and how many people need help (is anyone bleeding, unconscious, or without a pulse).
  - — Do not hang up! Let the emergency dispatcher hang up first.
- If possible, use flares or emergency triangles. If there is a gasoline leak or fumes, do not use the flares and do not smoke!
- Help anyone who is not walking and talking. Do not move an injured person unless he or she is in a burning vehicle or other danger. Moving someone incorrectly often makes an injury worse.
- Move the vehicle(s) involved out of the traffic lane if it is not disabled. Turn off the ignition of wrecked vehicle(s). Do not smoke! Fire is a great danger.

Involved in a Collision?

If you are involved in a vehicle collision—STOP. If you don't stop, you may be convicted of a hit and run and could be severely punished. Someone could be injured and need help. Call 911 immediately to report the collision to the police or California Highway Patrol (CHP). You must show your driver license, vehicle registration card, evidence of financial responsibility, and current address to the other driver or persons involved, or to any peace officer. Evidence of financial responsibility is usually an insurance company name and policy number. If you do not have it, you will receive a citation and fine.

You must do the following:

- Move your vehicle off the street or highway if no one is injured or killed. If you do not move your vehicle or have it removed from the street or highway, a peace officer or authorized personnel may have your vehicle removed and impounded (CVC §§22651 and 22651.05).
- Pull over to the side of the road and stop if you kill or injure an animal. Try to find the owner. If you can't find the owner, immediately call the nearest humane society, police, or CHP. Do not try to move an injured animal. Never leave an injured animal to die.
- Try to find the owner if you hit a parked vehicle or other property. Identify yourself before you leave. If you can't find the owner, leave a note with your name and address (and name and address of the owner of the vehicle you are driving) in the vehicle or securely attached to it. Immediately report the collision to the police or, in unincorporated areas, to CHP.
- Report the collision in writing to the police or CHP immediately if anyone is killed or injured and law enforcement was **not** present at the scene. When the driver of a vehicle involved in a collision is physically unable to report a collision to the police or CHP, any occupant who was in the vehicle at the time of the collision shall make the report on behalf of the driver.

You or your insurance agent, broker, or legal representative must do the following:

- Report the collision by completing a Report of Traffic Accident Occurring in California (SR1) form to DMV within 10 days if there is more than $1,000 in damage to the property of any person, or anyone is injured (no matter how slightly) or killed.

Insurance Requirements

You must be financially responsible for your actions whenever you drive and for all motor vehicles you own. Most drivers choose to have an automobile liability insurance policy as proof of financial responsibility. If you have a collision not covered by your insurance, your license will be suspended. If the driver involved in the collision is not identified, the owner of the motor vehicle involved will have his or her driver license suspended.

The minimum amount your insurance must cover is:

- $15,000 for a single death or injury.
- $30,000 for death or injury to more than one person.
- $5,000 for property damage caused by one collision.

Reporting a Collision to DMV

When you have a collision, report it to DMV using an SR 1 form. You or your insurance agent, broker, or legal representative must complete an SR 1 form and send it to DMV within 10 days if someone is injured (no matter how minor the injury) or killed, or property damage is over $1,000. An SR 1 form is required in addition to any other report made to the police, CHP, or your insurance company.

SR 1 forms are available at DMV field offices, CHP offices, or online at **dmv.ca.gov**. An SR 1 form is required whether you caused the collision or not, even if the collision occurred on private property.

Your driving privilege will be suspended if you do not complete an SR 1 form or did not have the proper insurance coverage at the time of the vehicle collision.

Every vehicle collision reported to DMV by **law enforcement** will show on your driving record unless the reporting officer says another person was at fault. Unless there is a corresponding law enforcement report on file that indicates another person was at fault, every vehicle collision reported by you or **another party** in the collision will also show on your driver record if at least one of the following occurs:

- Any vehicle or property involved has over $1,000 in damage.
- Anyone is injured or dies.

It does not matter who caused the vehicle collision. The law says DMV must keep this record.

Vehicle Collision Recap

The following information will help you complete an SR 1 form (keep it in your glove box). Do not use this pamphlet in place of filing an SR 1 form.

Record the:

- Date and time of the accident.
- Location of the accident.

You must give your current address and show the following documents to any peace officer and person(s) involved in the vehicle collision:

- Your driver license.
- Your vehicle registration card.
- Evidence of financial responsibility which includes your insurance company name and policy number.

Other Party's Information

Make sure to collect the following information from the other individuals(s):

- Driver's date of birth.
- Driver license number and state.
- Driver's name and address.
- Vehicle license plate number and state.
- Driver's insurance company name.
- Insurance policy number and expiration date.
- Policy holder's name and address.
- Vehicle owner's name and address.
- Injuries or property damage.