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What to Do If You're in a Car Accident

1. Don't leave the scene of the accident. If you don't stop for an accident you may be subject to criminal prosecution for leaving the scene of an accident.
2. Try not to move your vehicles until the police arrive in order to allow the officer to survey the scene and to ensure that evidence regarding how the accident occurred is preserved.
3. If your vehicles are obstructing the flow of traffic, try to move your vehicle the shortest distance possible from the place of impact without obstructing further traffic.
4. Remain at the scene of the accident and have others who have witnessed the occurrence immediately contact the police.
5. If you are injured, do not exit your vehicle.
6. Contact the local police department immediately if you have been the victim of someone else's lack of care in operating their automobile. Do not allow the other driver to convince you that this should be "handled among ourselves". Calling the police department is an especially important step if you feel any pain or injury as a result of the accident. Remember, if there is a lawsuit later on, your counterpart in the accident may have a completely different story when the matter reaches court than the one that he or she tells you at the scene of the accident.

7. If you feel pain at an accident scene and an ambulance is offered, utilize the ambulance services to go immediately to the closest emergency room.

Many people, even when they feel pain, will refuse medical attention at the scene and travel home. Then, after several hours of increasing pain, they will finally go to the hospital and present themselves at the emergency room. When their case reaches court, this delay in seeking medical attention is often used against them as a weapon to prove that the accident did not cause the injury.

8. Exchange information with the other driver and make sure you get:
 - A. The driver's: name, address, telephone number, driver's license number, name of insurance company, and policy number.
 - B. Names of passengers, including their address and phone number.
 - C. Names of witnesses with address and phone number.
 - D. Names of the vehicles' owner(s), if not the driver, including address, phone number, insurance company, and policy number.
9. Other information you should note:
 - A. Time of day
 - B. Weather conditions
 - C. Road conditions
 - D. Street lights
 - E. Presence or length of skid marks
 - F. Try to make a diagram noting the location of the vehicles, crosswalks, stop signs, and traffic signals.
10. Do not feel obligated to admit responsibility for the accident. The things that you say immediately following an accident may be used against you during the course of litigation. You may think that you were responsible for the accident and later learn that the other driver caused it or the other driver was equally at fault.
11. Before you allow your car to be towed, be sure to ask the driver how much it will cost and tell the driver where to take the car. Get the name, address, license number, registration number, and telephone number of the driver and the towing company.
12. After the Accident:

A. Contact a Lawyer

In this day and age, the simplest automobile accidents require many steps to be undertaken by a person who suffers injury. Your own insurance company must be contacted in the appropriate way with information regarding your personal injury protection plan obtained. No-fault benefits need to be secured as well as any benefits that may be available for an uninsured vehicle accident or an underinsured vehicle accident. Failure to properly notify the company through competent counsel may lead to an objection to such a claim on a later date.

Often times, forms must be filed with the Department of Public Safety, the local Police Department, or the Registry of Motor Vehicles. The assistance of a lawyer may be invaluable to the proper presentation of these forms.

B. Follow Up With Your Medical Care

In many cases involving injury, it is important that you follow up your medical care on a consistent basis. In many medical circles today, it is important that proper follow-up medical care be obtained in order to keep a person from developing further pain that may become incurable in the future. A doctor may recognize injuries, sometimes serious, that are not readily apparent from the first Emergency Room visit nor to you, even at a later date. The charges for a doctor's visit and medical treatment may be covered by insurance.