

If You Drive, Read This!

Traffic accidents happen every day. And even though you may be a good driver there's no assurance that the other guy on the road is as careful as you are. If you're in an accident, follow these simple guidelines to protect your legal rights.

Stop - Don't drive on; it's against the law.

Assist the injured - Call a doctor or ambulance for anyone who is seriously injured. Don't move an injured person or provide any hands on care unless you know you aren't going to cause further harm.

Protect the scene - Do what you can to prevent further accidents. Use flares, flashlights, or someone to warn oncoming traffic that an accident is ahead.

Call an officer - Even if there are no apparent injuries, call the police department, sheriff or highway patrol. Their official report may be of great assistance should any claims of liability be made later.

Do not comment - North Carolina law requires only that you give your name, address, the license plate number of the vehicle you are driving, and exhibit your driver's license to any person affected by the accident.

Assist the officer - Cooperate and relate the basic facts briefly. You need not give an opinion as to the cause of the wreck. You have the right to consult a lawyer before making any statements.

Identify the other driver - Obtain the driver's name, address, insurance and license plate number. Ask to see the driver's license, as well.

Record Witnesses - Obtain the full name, address and phone number of any and all witnesses as soon as you can. You may need these later.

Take notes - Record everything; measure skid marks, note car positions, note all physical evidence that will disappear over time. Take pictures if possible.

When to leave the scene - Only after you have addressed each of the above items is it safe to leave the scene of an accident.

Comply with financial responsibility - North Carolina law requires drivers to carry insurance. Failure to comply will result in revocation of your driver's license and vehicle registration.

Inform insurance company - Make a complete report to your insurance company; this should be done immediately after the accident.

As a final note, don't hesitate to call us if we can help. Too often we are consulted months and sometimes years after the collision, and then valuable evidence may have been lost, destroyed or otherwise become unavailable. There's no consultation fee when you call. This call could be one of the most important phone calls you ever make.