What a Car Accident Lawyer Looks at After a Rear-End or T-Bone Crash

Rear-end crashes and T-bone collisions are two crash types that come up often in injury claims. The label describes how the vehicles met, but it does not decide who was at fault. A car accident lawyer reviewing one of these crashes usually begins with the sequence of events, from each car's speed to the signals that controlled traffic.

What causes rear-end collisions

Many state traffic codes prohibit following another vehicle more closely than is reasonable and prudent, taking into account the speed of traffic and the condition of the road. Distracted driving is a common factor. NHTSA notes that sending or reading a text takes a driver's eyes off the road for 5 seconds, which at 55 mph is like driving the length of a football field with eyes closed. A car crash lawyer may ask for the other driver's phone records when distraction is suspected.

The trailing driver is often found at fault in a rear-end crash, yet that result is not automatic. A car that cuts in and brakes suddenly, brake lights that fail or a vehicle backing up can shift some or all of the fault. In a chain-reaction crash, every impact is its own event, and a middle vehicle pushed forward may not be responsible for the second impact.

Whiplash and soft tissue injuries

Rear-end impacts are often linked to whiplash, a neck injury caused by a rapid back-and-forth movement of the head. Symptoms such as neck pain and headaches may not appear until hours after the crash, which is one reason prompt medical care matters. Insurance companies sometimes challenge injury claims after low-speed rear-end crashes, citing minor vehicle damage. Medical records and photos of both vehicles help answer that argument, along with imaging such as an MRI when a doctor orders one.

Why side-impact crashes happen

In a T-bone crash, the front of one vehicle strikes the side of another, most often at an intersection. Common causes include running a red light or a stop sign and failing to yield on a left turn. The sides of a car have less room to absorb crash forces than the front or rear, which is why the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) rates side protection in a separate side-impact crash test. Occupants on the struck side can suffer serious injuries, including traumatic brain injury and pelvic fractures.

Disputes in these crashes often come down to who had the right of way. Useful evidence includes signal timing records, intersection camera video, nearby business surveillance footage, dashcam video and witness statements, plus the event data recorder (EDR) in each car, which may hold speed and braking data from the seconds before the crash. A car accident lawyer typically moves quickly to collect video, because many systems record over old footage within days or weeks.

Shared fault and comparative negligence

Fault is often shared. Most states use some version of comparative negligence, which lowers a recovery by the injured person's share of fault. Under modified comparative negligence, a person found at least caraccidentlawyers.wiki 50 or 51 percent at fault, depending on the state, may recover nothing, while pure comparative negligence allows a reduced recovery at any level of fault. A small number of jurisdictions still

follow contributory negligence, which can bar recovery for even slight fault. A motor vehicle accident attorney can explain which rule applies where the crash happened.

A note on deadlines

Every state sets its own statute of limitations for injury claims, and claims involving a government vehicle or agency can require written notice much sooner. This article is general information, not legal advice, and no article can predict how a claim will turn out.