

What to do in a Car Crash

According to the U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), there were 1.7 million teen driver car crashes in the year 2000. Those crashes resulted in 7,600 teen deaths and 569,000 teen injuries. Teen driver car crashes remain the single leading cause of permanent injury and death in teens across North America.

Given the number of teens involved in car crashes, it is imperative that new drivers know what to do in the event of a crash.

1. After impact and the car has come to a full stop, remain calm and assess the situation. Look at yourself and your passengers to determine if there are any injuries. Look out at the other vehicle and roadway to determine if there is a risk to yourself or others.
2. In the event of an injury, render first aid if you are qualified to do so and if it is safe to do so. At the same time, or as soon as possible, you or a bystander should call Emergency Medical Services (EMS), then your local law enforcement agency. In most areas, dialing 911 on a cell phone or any other phone can place emergency calls. To reduce the risk of shock in serious injuries, you may consider opening the window to allow fresh air to enter.
3. Some jurisdictions require you by law to move your vehicle off the travel portion of the roadway as part of a "quick clearance policy" while others prefer for the vehicle to remain in place to review as part of the investigation, as long as it is safe to do so. Check with your local law enforcement agency to find out the law in your community. However, safety considerations and good judgment will remain important in determining whether or not to move the vehicle in any given situation. Safety considerations should prevail.
4. If you are in a high traffic area and it is not safe to leave the vehicle, remain in your seat with your seatbelt fastened. If it is safe to leave the vehicle and your vehicle is inoperative, leave the vehicle and get a safe distance from the traveled portion of the roadway.
5. Once the crash scene is stabilized, do not discuss fault with other driver(s). This can lead to arguments. It is appropriate to exchange information such as license plate number, insurer, policy number, phone and address. Be sure photo identification matches the identification holder. It is also appropriate to obtain similar information from witnesses (anyone other than who was in any of the vehicles involved in the crash).

6. Cooperate completely with law enforcement personnel. They are there to help you. Provide all the information they require and follow their instructions. The law enforcement officer will record facts of the incident, take statements and write citations based upon observed violations of the law. Your insurer or lawyer may use this information to assess fault and liability.
7. Call your parents and inform them of your situation. Tell them if you require any assistance such as medical aid or transportation. Assuming the situation is under control and you are safe, assure them of your safety.

Lastly, as the result of some collisions, you may have to take action in a manner not specified, but dictated by the situation. Above all, remain calm; assess the situation and act first with regard to personal safety and the safety of others. Before heading out consider placing safety items in the trunk or rear area for emergencies related to crashes. These items include flares, orange cones, disposable camera, heat blanket, pad and pencil, first aid kit and fire extinguisher.