Rear-End and T-Bone Collisions: How Fault Is Decided

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 settle who was at fault. A car accident attorney looking at either type of crash usually begins with the sequence of events, from each car's speed to the signals that controlled traffic.

How rear-end collisions happen

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. Distraction is a frequent factor. NHTSA explains 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 accident attorney 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 vehicle that cuts in and stops short, brake lights that fail or a vehicle backing up can shift some or all of the fault. In a chain-reaction crash, each impact is a separate event, and a middle car pushed *Car Accident Lawyers Wiki* into the car ahead may not be at fault for that 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. Neck pain and headaches may not show up until hours after the crash, which is one reason a prompt medical evaluation matters. Insurers sometimes dispute injury claims from low-speed rear-end crashes, pointing to light 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.

How T-bone collisions 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, and the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) evaluates side protection in its own side-impact crash test. People seated on the struck side can suffer serious injuries such as traumatic brain injury or pelvic fractures.

These crashes often turn on 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.

Comparative negligence in these crashes

Fault is often shared. Most states apply some form of comparative negligence, which reduces a recovery by the injured person's percentage of fault. In states with modified comparative negligence, a person whose fault reaches 50 or 51 percent, depending on the state, may be barred from recovery, while pure comparative negligence allows a reduced recovery at any level of fault. A few jurisdictions still apply

contributory negligence, which can bar recovery for even slight fault. A motor vehicle accident attorney will know which rule applies in the state where the crash happened.

Deadlines and general information

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