How Fault Works in Rear-End and T-Bone Car Crashes

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 lawyer reviewing one of these crashes will usually start with the sequence of events, from the speed of each car to the signals that controlled the intersection.

How rear-end collisions happen

Many state traffic codes prohibit following another vehicle more closely than is reasonable and prudent, with attention to the speed of traffic and the condition of the road. Distraction is a frequent 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 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 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 car pushed into the car ahead may not be at fault for that second impact.

Neck injuries after a rear-end crash

Rear-end impacts are often linked to whiplash, a neck injury caused by the head snapping back and forth. 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, together *caraccidentlawyers.wiki* with imaging such as an MRI when a doctor orders it.

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. A car's sides have less space to absorb crash forces than its 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, as well as the event data recorder (EDR) in each car, which may store speed and braking data from the seconds before impact. An auto accident attorney typically moves quickly to collect video, because many systems record over old footage within days or weeks.

When both drivers share fault

Fault is not always all or nothing. Most states use some version 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 percentage of fault. A few jurisdictions still

apply contributory negligence, which can bar recovery for any fault at all. An automobile accident lawyer will know which rule applies in the state where the crash happened.

A note on deadlines

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.