

AFTER AN AUTO ACCIDENT

Many people think that common sense dictates what is to be done after an auto accident. Maybe so, but our common sense can desert us under stress. It is a good idea to keep this simple checklist in your car with your other important papers (registration, etc.).

- Get help for anyone injured.
- Call the police, especially if someone is injured or killed, if a vehicle can't be moved, or if the accident involved a hit-and-run driver.
- Get the other driver's name, address, telephone number, license plate number, driver's license number, and insurance information. Give the other driver the same information.
- Record the insurance company name and the policy number *exactly* as they appear on the other driver's proof-of-insurance card. Similar company names can cause confusion.
- Don't sign anything except a ticket, citation, or report issued by the police.
- Notify your insurance company promptly. It will want the names and addresses of witnesses and injured persons.
- Don't sign any document that gives up a legal right.
- Contact an attorney to find out about your right to recover for your injuries.

If you have been in an accident and are not sure whether you have a right to monetary damages, call an attorney. Decisions that must be made after an accident are very important. An attorney can advise you and, if appropriate, deal with the insurance company or other parties on your behalf.

Once an attorney is retained (which normally means a representation/fee agreement has been signed by both the client and the attorney), the attorney can begin to help you evaluate your bodily injury claim. Some of the ways an attorney can help you are as follows:

- An attorney can talk with your doctors, and obtain your medical and billing records.
- An attorney can deal with all the various insurance companies that may be involved – which can make the claim very confusing and complicated – including your auto insurance, the liable party’s auto insurance, your health insurance, Medicare/Medicaid, supplemental insurance, and so on.
- An attorney can interview witnesses and take additional photographs of the scene and the damage to your vehicle, or can have an investigator interview and take photographs.
- An attorney can negotiate an overall settlement, or help you decide if it is necessary or beneficial to file a lawsuit.

Nothing in this article should be construed as legal advice. You must consult with an attorney for the application of the law to your specific circumstances.

R. Michael Shickich is the founder of the Injury Law Firm located in Casper. The focus of his practice is personal injury and wrongful death cases.

The Wyoming State Bar does not certify any lawyer as a specialist or expert. Anyone considering a lawyer should independently investigate the lawyer’s credentials and ability, and not rely upon advertisements or self-proclaimed expertise.