

What to do at an Accident Scene

No one wants to be involved in an accident. When an accident occurs, the manner in which you respond and handle yourself can positively or negatively influence the outcome or liability exposure. It is critical to remain professional and represent the best interests of both yourself and your company.

Follow these three steps:

STEP ONE - SECURE THE SCENE

- Remain calm! It is critical to remain calm and stay in control of the situation.
- Shut down the engine. Turn on your emergency flashers.
- Protect yourself when exiting the truck. Watch for vehicles attempting to pass the accident scene. Don't be involved in the accident after the accident!
- Set out warning devices. The DOT requires that triangles or warning flares be placed within 10 minutes, if a commercial vehicle is blocking a traveled roadway.
- Check for injuries. **Our first priority should be to human life.**

STEP TWO – NOTIFY AUTHORITIES

- Contact dispatch/supervisors as soon as practical. Be prepared to provide information: location, vehicles involved, emergency personnel or tow truck required, injuries or fatalities, fuel spills or release of hazardous materials.
- Call for emergency personnel, as necessary. Do not leave the scene, unless there is no alternative.
- Provide information and cooperate with authorities.
- Do not speak or provide information to the media. Do not become hostile, simply state that, "Investigation is underway." Refer such inquires to company officials.
- Do not admit fault or apologize!

STEP THREE – DOCUMENT THE ACCIDENT, USE THE ACCIDENT KIT. WRITE DOWN EVERYTHING YOU OBSERVE!

- Names of witnesses (use the witness and exoneration cards available in the accident kit)
- **Record the required information.** This is **critical** to resolving the accident.
 - a) **Date, time, exact location**
 - b) **Make, model, type, license number, insurance company, owner's name and address for every vehicle involved.**
 - c) **Names and addresses of driver and passengers in each vehicle.**
 - d) **Name and addresses of each injured person, extent of injuries, where hospitalized.**
 - e) **Name and addresses of owners of all other damaged property.**

f) Descriptions and estimates of all damage to vehicles and property.

- Count the number of people in each vehicle.
- Road and weather conditions, terrain.
- Road debris (type of debris, location of debris in relation to vehicles)
- Name and badge number of officer(s) at the scene.
- Note extenuating circumstances of other vehicles.
 - a) Cell phone use?
 - b) Alcohol containers?
 - c) Condition of windows (cracked, fogged, ice covered)?
 - d) Windshield wipers in use?
 - e) Safety belt use?
 - f) Lights: Headlights? Brake lights? Turn signals?
 - g) Prescriptions glasses in use? Sunglasses?
 - h) Quotes from those involved?

PHOTOGRAPH THE SCENE

Always use flash to fill shadows. Take photos that include:

- All sides of all vehicles involved with close-ups of damage.
- Close-ups of license plates
- The vehicle interior if injuries occur, (seatbelt use?)
- Wide shots of the accident scene from various angles of the overall scene (make notes to explain position).
- Show where vehicles come to rest and in what position.
- Debris and loose parts that may indicate where collision occurred.
- Skid marks of all vehicles involved.
- Viewpoints of witnesses.
- Weather conditions.
- Traffic signs such as speed or yield signs.
- Person involved walking or standing at the scene to show their apparent physical condition.

DO NOT PHOTOGRAPH THE SERIOUSLY INJURED, BLOOD OR GORE.