MARTIN & JONES PLLC
Attorneys at Law

The worst thing you can do after a car accident is take any action that hurts your claim before you understand the potential consequences. At Martin & Jones, we've worked with many car accident victims and seen many mistakes. Some ways you can harm your claim include saying something that gives others reason to blame you for the accident, waiting too long to see a doctor, leaving the scene before authorities arrive, or talking to insurance companies without knowing how to protect your interests.

Information is one of your best allies, and that's what we want to help provide in this blog. After a crash, it's just as important to know what to avoid as it is to know what to do. We want you to be prepared!

What is the Most Common Bad Mistake that People Make After Car Accidents in North Carolina?

The most common error we see after car, truck, or motorcycle accidents is making a statement that could be interpreted as an admission of fault. It can happen very quickly. For instance, if someone at the scene is crying or complaining and you say "I'm sorry," those words could be used to "prove" you feel responsible for causing the crash. You might have meant you were sorry they were upset or sorry the accident happened, or you might have said it reflexively or to be polite. It doesn't matter why you said it—once the words are out, they become evidence that can be used against you.

Avoid saying anything that could harm your case. If you say "I'm fine" at any time, even months later after answering the phone, your words could be used as evidence that you are no longer injured. Any attempt to be sympathetic or even polite can be weaponized against you.

It is best to say as little as possible about the accident to anyone other than your attorney. (The statements you make to your attorney are protected by legal privilege and cannot be used against you.) The easiest way to avoid saying the wrong thing is to say nothing and let your attorney handle communications with insurance companies and others involved in the accident case. Your attorney can also help you understand how to handle questions so that your words cannot be twisted against you or misinterpreted.

What Mistake Can Get You Arrested?

The mistake that puts you at greatest risk legally would be to leave the scene of an accident in which someone has been injured or killed. Section 20-166 of the North Carolina Statutes explains drivers' obligations at an accident scene. If you are driving a vehicle involved in a crash with injuries or property damage over $1,000, you are expected to stay with your vehicle until a law enforcement officer completes their investigation or tells you you may leave.

You may leave only if you need to seek emergency assistance or move for safety reasons. Leaving the scene for any other reason is a criminal offense that can result in jail time.

Leaving the scene of an accident with serious injuries is a Class F felony. Penalties decrease if injuries are less serious, but even if a crash only causes property damage, you can still be charged with a misdemeanor for leaving the scene of a reportable crash without authorization.

What Mistake Can Harm You Most in the Long Run?

The worst thing many car accident victims have done is to wait too long before going to the doctor. They think the pain or dizziness will go away, or they tell themselves that they feel fine. Doctors can spot signs of serious injuries that are not obvious, such as internal bleeding. Waiting too long to get treatment can allow your injuries to get much worse.

From a legal perspective, waiting too long to get a medical exam can be disastrous. The insurance company will argue that your injuries were caused by something that happened later if you don't have records documenting your injuries right after the accident. They will also argue that your injuries must not have been serious, or you would have sought treatment sooner.

FAQs About the Worst Things to Do After an Accident

What other harmful mistakes should you avoid after a car crash?

Some of the other errors people make after car accidents include:

- Failing to report an accident to the police to get a police report
- Not taking photos or making notes to document information at the scene of the accident
- Giving too much information to the insurance company

- Posting about the accident on social media
- Accepting a settlement before learning the value of the claim or extent of medical needs
- Waiting too long to get legal advice

Should I talk to the insurance company?

If your vehicle was involved in the crash, you need to report it to your insurance company, but you don't need to provide detailed information or speculate about the possible causes of the accident. It is not a good idea to talk to the insurance companies representing others involved in the collision because they will be looking for ways to shift liability to you. Your attorney can talk to them instead.

To Avoid Mistakes, the Best Thing You Can Do is Talk to an Accident Attorney

Many people are not sure whether they need an attorney after an accident, and they hesitate to seek legal advice. But by doing so, they could miss out on important information.

If you've been hurt in an accident caused by someone else's negligent actions, we invite you to schedule a free, no-obligation consultation with an injury attorney at Martin & Jones. We can explain your rights and your best options for recovery. If our firm is not able to assist with your case, we may be able to point you to other resources that can help. But you risk nothing by talking to us.

Protect yourself and talk to an attorney sooner rather than later. To schedule your free consultation, call us at 800-662-1234 or contact us online today.

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