

## **Your Legal Rights**

**By: Michael Cecere**

### **HELPFUL REMINDERS TO AVOID AUTOMOBILE ACCIDENTS**

Automobile accidents cause property damage, personal injuries and aggravation. Not all automobile accidents are avoidable but there are a number of ways to lower the risk of getting into an automobile accident. The two most common accidents are rear end accidents and left turn accidents. Have you ever heard someone who has made a left turn in front of another vehicle causing an accident say that the other vehicle “came out of nowhere.” Well, we all know that vehicles do not “come out of nowhere.” The more likely explanation is that the driver making the left turn simply was not paying attention or was distracted for other reasons. The most common cause of a rear end accident is that the rear ending driver was distracted by some other activity. Below are some observations that might help us all be safer drivers on the road.

Before you make a left turn at an intersection, whether you have a green arrow or solid green light, make sure the vehicles coming from the opposite direction have come to a complete stop. Just because you have the right of way does not mean that other vehicles on the road are going to obey the rules of the road. Left turn accidents are the most dangerous types of accidents and cause the most significant injuries. Therefore, be careful when turning left and always know what the oncoming vehicles are doing before you enter the intersection. “But I had the green light” is small consolation if you and your passengers are injured in an accident.

Likewise, if you are approaching an intersection on a solid green light, make sure that vehicles coming from the opposite direction that are going to turn in front of you are going to yield right of way to your vehicle. It is sometimes impossible to know if the turning driver sees you and is going to wait for you to clear the intersection. If you are unsure, slow your vehicle before entering the intersection so you have a chance to stop if the other vehicle turns in front of you. Even though you have the green light you still have to exercise caution when entering the intersection.

If you are talking on the cell phone you cannot devote your full attention to the roadway. If it is necessary to talk on the cell phone, use a hands free system. If you do not have a hands free system, pull off to the side of the road and complete your call. Also, eating, shaving and putting on makeup while driving are all distractions that can lead to accidents. Handle all of your personal needs before you get into the automobile.

If you are in a rush to get somewhere you are more likely to speed. Due to the speed of your vehicle, you will be less likely to react to hazards in the roadway. When driving, take the time

to make yourself aware of the vehicles and drivers around you. It is difficult to predict what other drivers on the road are going to do, but if you are paying attention to those around you, you may be able to anticipate what the other cars are going to do and be able to avoid an accident. Try not to drive behind large vehicles that block your view of the roadway up ahead. If you cannot see what is ahead, you are less likely to be able to avoid an impact.

With the thunderstorms we experience in South Florida it is important to be able to operate your vehicle on wet roads. Make sure your vehicle is in good working condition before you get behind the wheel. Periodically check your tires to make sure they are not worn down to unsafe levels. Have your brakes checked to make sure they are in good working condition. Make sure your windshield wipers work properly. You do not want to discover that your wipers do not work in the middle of a downpour.

Lastly, drive the safest vehicle you can afford. Vehicles are manufactured with more and more safety features every year. Features such as anti-lock brakes and warning systems help make driving safer. Before purchasing a vehicle, check out how the vehicle performs under crash testing. Much of this information is available on the internet. Most vehicles are equipped with seatbelts, front air bags, side air bags, anti-lock brakes and warning systems. Use all the safety features on your vehicle. Also, encourage your passengers to wear their seatbelts as well.

Obviously, not all automobile accidents can be avoided. Even good drivers have them. However, by taking some of the precautions outlined above, you may be able to avoid some accidents or at least minimize any injuries that you and your passengers suffer in those accidents that are unavoidable.

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