

# What Happens When A Driver Turns Across A Cyclist's Path In Georgia?

## A Turning Driver Can Cut Off A Cyclist In Seconds And Leave Behind A Serious Injury Case

A [bicycle crash](#) doesn't have to happen at high speed to be violent. Sometimes the danger appears in one sudden move; a driver turns left across a cyclist's lane, cuts right across a bike lane, or swings into a driveway without seeing the rider already there. The cyclist has almost no time to brake, swerve, or escape. What follows is often a direct impact, a trip over the handlebars, or a secondary collision with the pavement or another vehicle.

At the [Law Offices of Gary Martin Hays & Associates, P.C.](#), our Georgia bicycle accident lawyers know these cases usually come down to one basic issue: who had the duty to yield before turning across the cyclist's path?

[Georgia Department of Driver Service](#) materials make two important points that shape that answer. First, bicyclists are legally entitled to use the road in Georgia, and drivers should yield to them the same way they would yield to another motorist. Second, when motorists cross over a bicycle lane to make a turn, they must yield to bicyclists who are already there.

That means a turning crash is often not a mystery. It's usually a question of whether the driver looked, yielded, and turned only when it was safe.

## The Road Rules That Usually Matter Most In These Cases

Georgia's rules give cyclists more protection than many drivers realize.

DDS says bicyclists are legally entitled to use every road in Georgia except interstates and interstate-like limited-access highways. DDS also says bicyclists are legally entitled to use the full lane and are not required to ride in a bike lane even when one is present. If a driver is turning across a bike lane, DDS says the driver must yield to bicyclists who are present in that lane.

[Georgia's driver materials](#) also say that when making a left turn, drivers must yield the right-of-way to all vehicles, including bicycles, approaching from the opposite direction, along with pedestrians crossing either roadway. That rule matters in left-turn bicycle crashes because the defense often tries to act like the cyclist appeared out of nowhere. Georgia's own driving guidance says otherwise.

Those rules create the framework for most of these cases. The cyclist didn't need special permission to be there. The driver needed to turn only when the movement could be made safely.

## The Different Ways These Crashes Usually Happen

A turning crash involving a cyclist doesn't always look the same. The basic mistake is often similar, but the setting changes how the case gets argued.

Some of the most common patterns include:

- **Left-Turn Across The Cyclist's Path:** A driver turning left at an intersection or into a driveway cuts across an oncoming cyclist who was traveling straight. DDS specifically tells drivers to yield to bicycles approaching from the opposite direction when making a left turn.
- **Right Turn Across A Bike Lane:** A driver crosses a bicycle lane to turn right without yielding to the rider already in it. DDS says motorists crossing over a bicycle lane to make a turn must yield to bicyclists that are present.
- **Driveway Or Parking Lot Entrance Turn:** A driver focuses on vehicle traffic and never looks carefully for a cyclist traveling along the roadway edge or bike lane.
- **Late Or Sudden Turn Movement:** A driver realizes too late that a turn is coming and cuts across the cyclist's path without enough time or distance.

These cases often look quick and chaotic afterward. In reality, they usually begin with one driver deciding to turn before the lane or path was actually clear. In many of these scenarios, the cyclist is already traveling in a straight, predictable path, while the driver introduces the sudden movement that creates the collision.

### **When The Driver Is Usually At Fault**

In many of these cases, fault starts with the driver because the driver had the obligation to wait, look carefully, and yield before crossing the cyclist's line of travel.

That's especially true when a bicyclist was already established in a bike lane or approaching lawfully in the opposite direction. DDS says drivers must yield to bicyclists in the bike lane when crossing it to turn, and drivers making left turns must yield to approaching bicycles just as they would other vehicles.

For example, if a cyclist is riding straight through an intersection or alongside traffic in a marked bicycle lane and a driver turns across that path, the driver usually can't erase the problem by claiming the bicycle was harder to see. Drivers still have a duty to see what's there before turning.

That doesn't mean every case is automatic. But it does mean the legal starting point is often much stronger for the cyclist than insurance companies want people to believe.

### **Where The Defense Usually Tries To Shift Blame**

Turning bicycle crashes almost always come with finger-pointing.

The insurance company may argue the cyclist was moving too fast, was outside the bike lane, failed to signal, rode into a blind area, or should've anticipated the turn sooner. In some cases,

they'll say the cyclist should've yielded even when the driver was the one crossing into the cyclist's path.

Georgia law still allows comparative fault disputes, so those arguments matter. If the defense can push enough blame onto the cyclist, it can reduce the value of the claim. That's why the exact lane position, direction of travel, signal sequence, and timing all matter so much. DDS also reminds drivers that bicyclists may lawfully use the full lane and should be treated as roadway users with the same right-of-way considerations as motorists.

That's where a lot of these cases are really decided, not on whether a collision happened, but on whether the driver can muddy the story enough to make the cyclist look partly responsible.

### **The Evidence That Usually Tells The Story**

These cases are often won with details, not guesses.

Some of the most important evidence usually includes:

- **Dashcam Or Surveillance Video:** Video may show whether the cyclist was established in the lane, whether the driver signaled, and how abruptly the turn happened.
- **Scene Photos:** Lane markings, bike lane striping, debris, skid marks, and final resting positions can all help show the sequence.
- **Vehicle And Bicycle Damage:** Contact points often help show whether the driver cut into the cyclist's path or whether the cyclist struck a vehicle that turned too late.
- **Witness Statements:** Drivers, pedestrians, and nearby riders may have seen who moved first and whether the cyclist had any real chance to avoid the turn.
- **Police Report And Citations:** These may identify roadway violations, turning failures, or driver admissions made right after the crash.

A lot of the legal fight in these cases comes down to whether the evidence shows the cyclist was already there and the driver simply turned anyway.

### **Why These Crashes Can Cause Severe Injuries Even At Lower Speed**

A turning crash doesn't need highway speed to leave a cyclist seriously hurt. A bike has no steel frame around the rider. So even a moderate-speed impact can throw the rider into the hood, windshield, pavement, curb, or another lane of travel.

These crashes often lead to:

- **Head Injuries:** A cyclist may strike the vehicle or the ground head-first even when wearing a helmet.
- **Fractures:** Wrists, collarbones, elbows, ribs, hips, and legs are especially vulnerable in a sudden ejection or side impact.
- **Spinal Injuries:** A hard landing or rotational fall can damage the neck or back.

- **Road Rash And Soft Tissue Damage**: The second impact with the pavement often causes its own serious harm.

That's one reason these claims can become [major injury cases](#). The turn itself may take only a second. The treatment and recovery can last for months or years. Even at lower speeds, the lack of protection for the rider means the force of the impact is absorbed almost entirely by the body.

### **What If The Crash Happened In Or Near A Bike Lane?**

That can make the driver's duty even clearer.

DDS says motorists are prohibited from driving or parking in a bicycle lane except to cross over it to make a turn, and when they do cross it to turn, they must yield to bicyclists who are present. DDS also says bicyclists are not required to ride in a bike lane even when one exists, which is important because insurers sometimes try to use lane position as an unfair shortcut argument against injured riders.

So, whether the cyclist was in the bike lane itself or lawfully using the roadway nearby, the turning driver still may have created the danger by cutting across the cyclist's path without yielding.

### **How Damages Are Evaluated In A Bicycle Turning Accident Case**

A turning crash can lead to more than immediate medical treatment. Many cyclists face surgery, time away from work, and long-term limitations that affect their daily lives.

In these cases, the value of a claim often depends on how clearly the evidence shows the driver cut across the cyclist's path and how significantly the injuries affect the rider moving forward.

Damages are often tied to:

- **The Point Of Impact**: Whether the cyclist struck the vehicle directly or was forced into a secondary collision.
- **Loss Of Income Over Time**: Time away from work and any limits on returning to the same type of job.
- **Lasting Physical Effects**: Ongoing pain, reduced mobility, or permanent impairment.
- **Medical Care Beyond The Initial Injury**: Surgeries, follow-up treatment, and rehabilitation.
- **Disruption To Daily Routines**: The ability to ride, commute, exercise, or carry out normal activities.
- **Clarity Of The Crash Sequence**: Strong evidence showing the driver turned before it was safe can significantly affect how the claim is valued.

In many cases, the difference between a minimal offer and full compensation comes down to whether the crash is framed as a shared mistake or a clear failure to yield.

## **FAQs About Bicycle Turning Crashes in Georgia**

### **Does A Driver Have To Yield To A Cyclist Before Turning Left In Georgia?**

Yes. Georgia DDS says drivers making a left turn must yield the right-of-way to all vehicles, including bicycles, approaching from the opposite direction.

### **What If The Driver Turned Right Across A Bike Lane?**

DDS says motorists crossing over a bicycle lane to make a turn must yield to bicyclists that are present. That rule often becomes central in right-turn bicycle crash cases.

### **Does A Cyclist Have To Ride In A Bike Lane If One Is Present?**

No. DDS says bicyclists are legally entitled to use the full lane and are not required to be in a bike lane even when one is present.

### **Can The Insurance Company Still Blame The Cyclist?**

It may try. These cases often involve arguments about speed, lane position, visibility, and reaction time. That's why the physical evidence and crash sequence matter so much.

### **What Evidence Helps Prove A Driver Turned Across A Cyclist's Path?**

Video, witness statements, scene photos, damage patterns, and the police report often help show whether the cyclist was established in the roadway or bike lane before the driver turned.

### **A Turning Driver Doesn't Get To Pretend The Cyclist Wasn't There**

A bicycle rider can be traveling exactly where Georgia law allows, moving straight, visible, and doing nothing wrong, and still get cut off by a driver who turns too soon. That's what makes these crashes so frustrating. The danger often comes from one ordinary driving movement made without the caution the law requires.

At the Law Offices of Gary Martin Hays & Associates, P.C., we've been fighting for Georgia's injured since 1993, and we've recovered over \$1 billion for Georgia families. If a driver turned across your path and caused a serious bicycle crash, give us a call or [contact us online](#) for a free consultation.