

What Happens In A Georgia Dooring Bicycle Accident?

A Car Door Can Turn An Ordinary Bike Ride Into A Violent Crash In Seconds

A [bicycle crash](#) doesn't need high speed to cause devastating injuries. Sometimes all it takes is a parked driver or passenger who swings a car door open without looking. One second, the cyclist is riding through a city street, a neighborhood corridor, or a line of parked cars. The next, they're thrown over the handlebars, slammed into the pavement, or pushed into moving traffic with almost no time to react.

At the [Law Offices of Gary Martin Hays & Associates, P.C.](#), our Georgia bicycle accident lawyers know dooring crashes are often brushed off like freak accidents. They're not. In many cases, they start with a very specific safety failure.

Georgia law says a person may not open a motor vehicle door on the side available to moving traffic unless it's reasonably safe to do so and can be done without interfering with traffic. That same law also says a person may not leave the door open longer than necessary to load or unload passengers. [O.C.G.A. § 40-6-243](#) puts that duty right on the person opening the door.

That's a strong starting point in a bicycle dooring case, but it's usually not the only issue that matters.

What Makes A Bicycle Dooring Crash So Dangerous?

A cyclist doesn't have much room to recover when a door suddenly opens in front of them. If there's traffic to the left and parked cars to the right, there may be nowhere safe to go. Some riders hit the door directly. Others swerve to avoid it and get thrown from the bike or hit by another vehicle.

These crashes often lead to [severe injuries](#) such as:

- **Traumatic Brain Injuries:** Even with a helmet, a rider can suffer a [concussion](#) or more severe head trauma after striking the door or the pavement.
- **Facial And Dental Injuries:** The force of being pitched forward can drive the rider face-first into the door, road, or handlebars.
- **Fractures:** Wrists, elbows, collarbones, ribs, and hips are especially vulnerable when a cyclist is thrown sideways or over the bars.
- **Road Rash And Soft Tissue Damage:** Sliding across pavement can leave lasting scars and painful tissue injuries.
- **Secondary Impact Injuries:** A rider may avoid the door only to be hit by a passing car while swerving into the lane.

That's what makes these cases so serious. The crash may start with a stationary car, but the cyclist is the one who absorbs the violence. In many cases, the rider has less than a second to

react, which is why these crashes often happen even when the cyclist is riding predictably and following the rules of the road.

What Georgia Laws Usually Matter In A Dooring Bicycle Case?

The door-opening statute is often the centerpiece, but it's not the only law that can come into play.

Georgia's dooring statute, O.C.G.A. § 40-6-243, makes clear that no one should open a door into moving traffic unless it's safe and won't interfere with traffic. Georgia law also recognizes that bicyclists have road-use rights and duties.

[O.C.G.A. § 40-6-294](#) says a person riding a bicycle on a roadway should ride as near to the right side of the roadway as practicable, with important exceptions for things like avoiding hazards, preparing for a left turn, or when the lane is too narrow to share safely. The Governor's Office of Highway Safety also summarizes Georgia bicycle laws and notes that cyclists are subject to many of the same traffic rules as drivers.

Those two points matter together. A driver or passenger can't excuse opening a door into traffic just by saying, "The bicyclist was close to the parked cars." At the same time, the exact lane position of the cyclist may still become part of the liability fight if the defense tries to argue the rider was traveling unsafely.

Who Can Be At Fault In A Bicycle Dooring Accident?

The person who opened the door is often the clearest at-fault party, but these cases can get more layered than people expect.

Possible at-fault parties may include:

- **The Driver Of The Parked Vehicle:** If the driver opened the door without checking for approaching cyclists, that may directly support liability under Georgia's door-opening law.
- **A Passenger:** The statute applies to the person opening the door, not just the vehicle owner or driver. A passenger can create the same danger with the same consequences.
- **A Passing Driver:** If the cyclist swerved to avoid the door and was then hit by a moving vehicle, another driver's actions may become part of the case too.
- **Potentially A Commercial Operator:** If the vehicle was tied to delivery work, rideshare activity, or another work-related use, the liability and insurance issues may get more complicated.

This is one reason these claims need a careful investigation. What looks like a simple parked-car incident can actually involve several decisions made within a few seconds.

How Does The Insurance Company Usually Try To Defend These Cases?

Most insurers don't want a dooring crash to sound as preventable as it really was. They'll often try to shift the focus from the door-opening decision to the cyclist's position, speed, or reaction.

Common defense arguments include:

- **The Cyclist Was Riding Too Close To Parked Cars:** That sounds straightforward until you look at the lane width, traffic flow, and whether the cyclist had any safer option.
- **The Cyclist Should Have Seen The Door Opening:** In real life, a rider often has only a split second to respond.
- **The Cyclist Was Moving Too Fast:** That may get raised even when the actual problem was a door opening into the rider's path without warning.
- **The Rider Overreacted By Swerving:** This argument often ignores the fact that the door created the emergency in the first place.

That's where evidence matters. A defense theory can sound clean from a desk. The crash scene usually tells a messier, and more accurate, story.

What Evidence Usually Helps Prove A Dooring Bicycle Claim?

These cases often turn on fast details, so early evidence can make a huge difference.

Some of the most useful proof includes:

- **Photos Of The Scene:** The parked vehicle's position, the roadway width, the bike lane if there is one, and the door angle can all matter.
- **Damage To The Bike And Door:** Contact points can help show whether the cyclist struck a suddenly opened door or whether the door had been left open.
- **Witness Statements:** Nearby drivers, pedestrians, or other cyclists may have seen whether the door flew open right before impact.
- **Surveillance Or Dashcam Video:** In urban or commercial areas, cameras sometimes capture the exact sequence.
- **Medical Records:** Injury patterns can help explain whether the cyclist hit the door directly, went over the handlebars, or was pushed into traffic.

For example, if video shows a cyclist traveling predictably alongside parked cars and a passenger suddenly opening a door into that space, the case often looks very different than the defense version that tries to blame the rider for everything.

How Does Comparative Fault Affect A Georgia Bicycle Dooring Case?

Georgia follows a modified comparative fault system. Under [O.C.G.A. § 51-12-33](#), a plaintiff's damages can be reduced by their percentage of fault, and recovery is barred if they are 50 percent or more responsible.

That means the defense may try to place part of the blame on the cyclist to reduce the value of the case. If successful, that can directly shrink the compensation available. So even when the door-opening statute strongly favors the injured cyclist, the case still has to address all the surrounding facts, including lane position, visibility, speed, and the rider's chance to avoid the crash.

This is where many of these cases are won or lost. Not on whether a door opened, but on how much the defense can muddy what happened next.

What If The Cyclist Was In A Bike Lane?

That can strengthen the case even more.

Georgia law says a motor vehicle operator must yield to a person operating a bicycle in a bicycle lane on the roadway under [O.C.G.A. § 40-6-55](#). If a parked driver or passenger opens a door directly into a bike lane where a cyclist has the right to be, the liability picture can become even harder for the defense to explain away.

But even without a marked bike lane, a cyclist may still have a strong case. A parked vehicle occupant doesn't get a free pass to open a door into active traffic simply because the rider was on the roadway instead of in a striped lane.

What Damages Can Be Recovered After A Bicycle Dooring Accident?

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

Compensation in a bicycle dooring case may include:

- **Medical Expenses:** Emergency care, surgery, and ongoing treatment.
- **Lost Income:** Wages lost during recovery and reduced ability to work.
- **Pain And Suffering:** Physical pain and the impact on quality of life.
- **Permanent Injury Or Impairment:** Long-term limitations or disability.
- **Future Care Needs:** Continued treatment or rehabilitation.
- **Wrongful Death Damages:** Losses experienced by surviving family members in [fatal cases](#).

The value of a claim often depends on how clearly the evidence shows what happened and how significantly the injuries affect the rider's life moving forward.

FAQs About Bicycle Dooring Accidents in Georgia

Is Opening A Car Door Into A Cyclist Illegal In Georgia?

It can be. Georgia's door-opening statute, O.C.G.A. § 40-6-243, says a person can't open a vehicle door on the side available to moving traffic unless it's reasonably safe and won't interfere with traffic.

Can A Passenger Be Liable For A Dooring Bicycle Crash?

Yes. The law applies to the person opening the door, so a passenger may be just as responsible as the driver if they create the hazard.

What If The Cyclist Swerved And Got Hit By Another Car?

There may still be a strong claim. The key issue is often whether the open door created the emergency that forced the cyclist into traffic, and whether another driver also contributed to the injuries.

Does A Cyclist Have To Ride In A Certain Part Of The Road In Georgia?

Georgia law generally says bicyclists should ride as near to the right side of the roadway as practicable, but there are important exceptions for hazards, left turns, and lanes that are too narrow to share safely.

Can A Cyclist Still Recover Compensation If The Insurance Company Blames Them Too?

Potentially, yes. Georgia comparative fault law allows recovery if the cyclist is less than 50 percent at fault, though the damages are reduced by that percentage.

A Parked Car Can Still Create A Serious Georgia Injury Case

A dooring crash may start from a parked car, but there's nothing minor about the injuries it can cause. Broken bones, head trauma, surgeries, lost time from work, and lasting pain can all grow out of one careless moment when someone opens a door without looking.

Since 1993, we've fought for Georgia's injured, and we've [recovered over \\$1 billion](#) for Georgia families. If you were hurt in a bicycle dooring accident, give us a call or [contact us online](#) for a free consultation. We represent injured people on a contingency-fee basis, so there are no upfront costs, and you won't owe us an attorney's fee unless we recover compensation for you.