

Pedestrian Accidents On Georgia Highways And Interstates

Why Being Struck On A High-Speed Road Produces The Most Devastating Injury Outcomes

A tire blows out on I-20 west of [Atlanta](#) and a driver manages to get the car to the right shoulder, but only barely. The car is sitting partly in the right travel lane. The driver gets out to assess the damage and takes three steps toward the rear of the vehicle when a semi-truck clips the car and sends the driver into the guardrail. It takes emergency responders 18 minutes to reach the scene. The driver survives, but with a shattered pelvis, fractured vertebrae, and a traumatic brain injury from the impact with the concrete barrier.

This isn't a hypothetical designed to illustrate an unlikely scenario. Pedestrian crashes on Georgia interstates and high-speed highways represent some of the deadliest collisions on the state's road network, and most of them happen to people who never intended to be walking on a highway at all. They're stranded motorists. They're crash survivors who exited their damaged vehicle. They're roadway workers. And in some cases, they're people who had no vehicle to start with and were attempting to walk across or along a highway corridor where foot traffic is prohibited.

At the [Law Offices of Gary Martin Hays & Associates, P.C.](#), our [Georgia pedestrian accident lawyers](#) have seen the catastrophic injuries these crashes produce and the complicated liability disputes that follow them. The circumstances that put a pedestrian on a Georgia highway matter enormously, but they don't extinguish the at-fault driver's responsibility.

Who Ends Up On A Georgia Highway As A Pedestrian?

Most pedestrian highway accidents don't begin with someone choosing to walk on an interstate. They begin with a vehicle emergency. A mechanical failure, a crash, a flat tire, or a sudden medical episode leaves someone stranded in a location where foot traffic wasn't supposed to be. The pedestrian on the highway is often a victim twice over, first of the vehicle failure that stranded them and then of the driver who didn't move over or slow down before striking them.

The categories of people who end up on Georgia interstates and highways on foot include:

- **Stranded Motorists After A Breakdown:** A vehicle that loses a tire, overheats, or experiences a mechanical failure may not make it to an exit ramp or safe pullout. Drivers who stop on the shoulder, or who can only partially clear the lane, are often forced to exit the vehicle and walk in or near traffic while waiting for assistance.
- **Crash Survivors Trying To Exit The Scene:** After a collision, occupants sometimes exit damaged vehicles before emergency responders arrive, particularly when there's concern about fire, fluid leaks, or a vehicle blocking traffic. Those individuals become pedestrians in an active highway crash zone.
- **Roadway And Utility Workers:** Construction crews, GDOT maintenance workers, and utility employees work on and alongside Georgia highways on a daily basis. Despite

safety protocols, high-speed vehicle strikes on work zone personnel are an ongoing cause of catastrophic injuries and deaths.

- **Emergency Responders At Crash Scenes:** Law enforcement, EMS crews, and fire personnel working at active crash scenes face extreme exposure when drivers fail to comply with Georgia's move-over law. An officer or paramedic working in a travel lane has no ability to dodge a vehicle traveling at highway speed.
- **Individuals Walking In Rural Highway Corridors:** In parts of Georgia without public transportation, individuals without vehicles sometimes attempt to walk along state highways, particularly in rural areas where the road shoulders are the only available walking path between communities.

Georgia Law On Pedestrians And Highway Access

Georgia law addresses pedestrian access to controlled-access highways, and the rules are worth understanding because insurance adjusters often misapply them to shift blame to the pedestrian. Under [Georgia statutes](#), pedestrians are generally prohibited from using the roadway portions of controlled-access facilities like interstate highways. But this restriction does not eliminate a driver's duty to avoid striking a person who is nonetheless present on the road.

Georgia's negligence framework doesn't include a provision that says a driver may lawfully strike a pedestrian who shouldn't have been on the road. A driver who sees a person walking on a highway shoulder has a duty to take reasonable evasive action. A driver who doesn't see the pedestrian because they were distracted, fatigued, impaired, or traveling at a speed that prevented them from stopping in time has violated the duty of care they owe to other road users, regardless of whether that user was lawfully present.

The [comparative fault rules in Georgia](#) do allow the at-fault driver to argue that the pedestrian's presence in a prohibited location contributed to the crash. But as long as the pedestrian's fault is found to be less than 50 percent, recovery is available and is reduced only by the percentage attributed to the pedestrian. In most cases involving a stranded motorist struck by a driver who wasn't paying attention, the pedestrian's comparative fault percentage is significantly lower than the driver's.

The Forces At Highway Speed And The Injuries They Produce

A vehicle traveling at 70 mph striking a pedestrian who is standing still delivers approximately 100 times more kinetic energy than the same vehicle striking a pedestrian at 10 mph. The human body is not designed to absorb that energy. The injuries that result from pedestrian crashes on Georgia highways are categorically different from pedestrian crashes at lower-speed urban intersections.

A pedestrian struck by a vehicle traveling at highway speed will typically experience initial contact from the vehicle's bumper to the lower extremities, producing broken pelvis injuries, femur fractures, and knee destruction. The body then rolls up the hood and onto the windshield, producing thoracic and abdominal trauma, rib fractures, and aortic injury. If the body subsequently contacts the pavement or a guardrail, additional [traumatic brain injury](#) and

spinal trauma result. Survivors of these crashes face long hospitalizations, multiple surgeries, and in many cases, permanent disability.

When the vehicle involved is a commercial truck, the impact dynamics are even more severe. The elevated bumper and frame of a semi-truck strike a pedestrian at mid-torso height, transmitting the collision force directly to the chest and abdomen before the body is thrown rather than rolled. Internal injuries in these cases, including organ lacerations and internal bleeding, are often the immediate life threat.

What Evidence Controls The Outcome Of A Highway Pedestrian Case?

Highway pedestrian crash investigations are typically more complex than a standard street-level collision. There are more moving pieces, more potential defendants, and a compressed window to gather the evidence that matters. The critical evidence categories in these cases include:

- **Crash Scene Documentation And Reconstruction:** Professional accident reconstruction can establish vehicle speed at impact, pre-impact braking distance, the pedestrian's exact position, and whether the driver had adequate sight distance to stop or steer around them. This analysis often contradicts the driver's claim that the pedestrian "appeared out of nowhere."
- **Vehicle Event Data Recorder (EDR) Information:** Most modern vehicles record speed, throttle position, braking inputs, and seatbelt status in the seconds before a crash. [Event data recorder misinterpretation](#) by the carrier's own experts is a known problem, and independent analysis of this data is often decisive.
- **Traffic Camera And Commercial Vehicle Dashcam Footage:** Georgia's interstate system is monitored by GDOT cameras, and many commercial vehicles carry forward-facing cameras. Footage from these sources can show the driver's behavior and positioning in the seconds before impact, including whether they were in the travel lane when they should have moved over.
- **The Vehicle That Experienced The Mechanical Failure:** If the pedestrian was on the highway because their vehicle broke down, the maintenance history of that vehicle, its most recent service records, and any prior defect reports can establish whether a vehicle owner or manufacturer contributed to creating the situation.
- **At-Fault Driver's History And Condition At Impact:** Employment records, prior driving history, cell phone usage data, and the results of any field sobriety test or blood draw taken at the scene all contribute to the picture of whether the driver was impaired, distracted, or fatigued when the crash happened.

Georgia's Move-Over Law And Highway Worker Protections

[Georgia's move-over law](#) requires drivers approaching stationary emergency vehicles, tow trucks, and law enforcement on a highway to move over one lane or reduce speed. The law applies to GDOT highway workers and similarly situated personnel as well. Georgia has strengthened these protections over multiple legislative sessions, and violations carry significant fines and license consequences.

When a pedestrian is a worker or emergency responder, the move-over law creates a clear standard against which the driver's conduct can be measured. Dashcam footage, traffic camera recordings, and witness statements that document a driver's failure to slow or move over in the presence of visible emergency lighting create strong liability evidence.

The [Georgia Governor's Office of Highway Safety](#) tracks crash data on highway pedestrian incidents, and the numbers consistently show that failure to move over and maintain safe speed near stopped vehicles is a recurring cause of highway worker and responder injuries. The [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#) similarly identifies roadway departure crashes and struck-pedestrian collisions on limited-access highways as among the most severe crash types in the national dataset. This data becomes part of the factual record in these cases.

How Georgia SB 68 Affects Damages In These Cases

For pedestrian highway crashes that occurred on or after April 21, 2025, Georgia's Senate Bill 68 changes how medical bill damages are evaluated by juries. Under the [SB 68 phantom damages reform](#), juries now see both the billed amount and the amount actually paid by health insurance when determining reasonable medical expenses. Catastrophic pedestrian crash cases often involve extraordinary medical bills, and understanding how the SB 68 framework shapes the damages presentation is essential to evaluating any settlement offer.

The law also changed how bifurcated trials work and affects the voluntary dismissal window. If your case involves a crash after April 21, 2025, the [broader SB 68 changes](#) to Georgia's civil litigation landscape are part of the strategic context.

Liability On Georgia's Fastest Roads

Highway pedestrian crashes frequently involve multiple potentially liable parties. The at-fault driver carries primary liability. But depending on how the pedestrian came to be on the road, additional defendants may include the owner of the vehicle that experienced the mechanical failure, a vehicle manufacturer whose defect caused the breakdown, a maintenance contractor responsible for keeping the road shoulder clear and passable, or a commercial trucking company whose driver failed to slow or move over.

With over [\\$1 billion recovered for Georgia families](#) hurt in accidents of every kind, our firm understands how to identify all potentially responsible parties and how to construct a case that accounts for the full scope of catastrophic injury.

We take pedestrian crash cases on a pure contingency basis. Not a dollar leaves your pocket for legal representation until our firm has won compensation for you. If you or someone in your family was struck on a Georgia highway or interstate, [contact us](#) immediately. Evidence at the crash scene may already be disappearing.