

Left-Turn Car Accidents In Georgia

When The Right Of Way Isn't As Clear As It Seems

A left-turn crash looks simple from the outside. One car was going straight. One was turning. The turning driver had a duty to yield. Case closed. But the reality of how these crashes happen, and how the liability actually shakes out under Georgia law, is considerably more complicated. The driver making the left turn doesn't always bear the full weight of what happened, and the through driver who assumes they're protected by the right of way may have contributed more to the collision than they realize.

Left-turn accidents are among the most common serious car crashes on Georgia roads, and they produce some of the most contested liability disputes that personal injury lawyers handle. The angle of impact, the speed of the through driver, signal timing, sight line obstructions, and the specific geometry of the intersection can all shift the fault picture in ways that a police report doesn't capture and an insurance company won't volunteer to acknowledge.

At the [Law Offices of Gary Martin Hays & Associates, P.C.](#), our [Georgia car accident lawyers](#) represent people injured in left-turn crashes throughout Atlanta, Marietta, Alpharetta, and the surrounding communities. These cases require a careful reconstruction of the intersection, the signals, and the speeds involved, because the initial fault assignment rarely tells the whole story.

What Georgia Law Says About Left Turns And The Duty To Yield

Georgia law establishes the fundamental rule for left-turn yielding under [O.C.G.A. § 40-6-71](#), which provides that a driver intending to turn left within an intersection shall yield the right of way to any vehicle approaching from the opposite direction that is within the intersection or so close as to constitute an immediate hazard. That duty to yield is clear as a starting point, but it's not the end of the analysis. The question of whether an approaching vehicle was "so close as to constitute an immediate hazard" depends entirely on the facts: the approaching driver's speed, whether that speed was lawful, and what the turning driver could reasonably have seen and judged at the moment they committed to the turn.

Georgia's comparative fault framework means that even a turning driver who violated O.C.G.A. § 40-6-71 may only be partially responsible if the through driver was speeding, ran a yellow light at an unreasonable speed, or failed to take available evasive action. Under [O.C.G.A. § 51-12-33](#), fault is apportioned across all parties who contributed to the crash, and a plaintiff's recovery is reduced by whatever percentage of fault the jury assigns to them. The critical point for anyone injured in a left-turn crash is that a finding that the turning driver was primarily at fault doesn't eliminate recovery for the person who was hit. It adjusts it.

Common fault-sharing scenarios in Georgia left-turn cases include:

- **Speeding Through Driver And Timing Misjudgment:** A turning driver who initiates a left turn based on the distance and speed of an approaching vehicle isn't necessarily negligent if that vehicle was traveling substantially over the speed limit. When the

through driver's actual speed was materially higher than posted limits, the turning driver's timing judgment may have been reasonable based on what they could lawfully have expected to encounter. Speed reconstruction through event data recorder evidence frequently reveals this pattern.

- **Obscured Signal Status And Intersection Timing:** At intersections with dedicated turn signals, a turning driver who enters the turn on a protected left-arrow phase isn't violating O.C.G.A. § 40-6-71. When signal timing evidence shows the light configuration at the moment of impact, disputes about who had the legal right to proceed can be resolved with data rather than competing witness accounts.
- **Through Driver Running Yellow Or Red Lights:** A through driver who accelerated through a late yellow or red light to beat the signal shift isn't entitled to unlimited protection under the right-of-way doctrine. The right of way is a traffic management tool, not an absolute shield, and a driver who abandons the legal right by violating a traffic control device becomes a contributing cause of the crash.
- **Sight Line Obstructions Created By Third Parties:** When a parked truck, overgrown vegetation, or poorly placed signage blocked the turning driver's view of oncoming traffic, the obstruction itself may support a claim against the party responsible for it. Municipalities that fail to maintain adequate sight lines at signalized intersections have potential liability under Georgia's Tort Claims Act, and private property owners whose landscaping or structures obstruct intersection visibility can be brought into the claim.

How These Crashes Happen On Georgia Roads

Think of a driver heading north on Peachtree Road who enters a left-turn pocket at a signalized intersection, waits for a gap in southbound traffic, and initiates the turn. The gap looks adequate based on the distance and visible speed of the approaching southbound vehicle. The turn is underway when the southbound driver, who had been accelerating from a prior signal, closes the distance faster than expected. The impact happens at the front quarter panel of the turning vehicle and the passenger side of the approaching car.

The [police report](#) notes the turning driver failed to yield. The southbound driver tells the officer they were going with the flow of traffic. The turning driver says the car was farther away when they started the turn than it was at impact. The injured passenger in the turning vehicle has no stake in either driver's account.

This scenario plays out on Peachtree Street, on Roswell Road, at dozens of suburban intersections across Cobb County and DeKalb County, and at highway frontage road intersections throughout the Atlanta metro every week. It produces [soft tissue injuries](#), [traumatic brain injuries](#), and [spinal cord damage](#) depending on the speed of the through vehicle and the angle of impact, and the injury severity almost always outpaces what the police report's preliminary fault finding would suggest.

The Evidence That Changes The Liability Picture

Left-turn crash liability disputes are ultimately won or lost on the physical evidence. Witness accounts conflict. Both drivers have a stake in their version of events. The evidence that doesn't lie is the kind that has to be secured quickly before it's overwritten, lost, or altered.

The evidence categories that most often shift the fault picture in left-turn crash cases include:

- **Event Data Recorder Speed And Braking Data:** Modern vehicles record speed, braking inputs, and throttle position in the seconds before impact. When the through driver's EDR shows they were traveling 15 mph over the posted limit without braking, that data directly affects the O.C.G.A. § 40-6-71 analysis and the comparative fault apportionment. [EDR data](#) must be preserved through immediate litigation hold before it's overwritten.
- **Traffic Camera And Intersection Surveillance Footage:** Intersections along major Georgia corridors are increasingly covered by GDOT traffic management cameras, private business cameras, and dashcam footage from other vehicles. This footage can establish signal status, vehicle positions, and pre-crash speeds in a format that doesn't depend on any driver's recollection.
- **Signal Timing Records From The Traffic Management System:** GDOT and local traffic engineering departments maintain signal timing data for signalized intersections. When the question is whether a through driver had a green light or was running a yellow, signal phase records establish the objective answer.
- **Skid Mark And Crash Reconstruction Analysis:** The length and position of skid marks at the crash scene, combined with the final resting position of both vehicles and the point of impact on each vehicle, allow a qualified accident reconstructionist to work backward to the speeds and positions at the moment the crash became unavoidable. This reconstruction often contradicts the initial police report.
- **Dashcam Footage From The Involved Vehicles Or Nearby Traffic:** [Dashcam evidence](#) has become one of the most powerful tools in Georgia car crash cases. A dashcam mounted in the through driver's vehicle captures the entire approach, and the speed at which the intersection enters and fills the frame tells a reconstructionist exactly how fast that driver was moving.

Calculating Damages When Fault Is Shared

Left-turn crash injuries run the full range from minor soft tissue harm to catastrophic orthopedic, neurological, and spinal injuries. [How pain and suffering is valued in Georgia car accident cases](#) depends on the nature and duration of the harm, the impact on the injured person's life and work, and whether the injury resolves fully or leaves permanent limitations.

[Delayed symptoms after Georgia car accidents](#) are common in left-turn crashes because the angle of impact frequently causes whiplash and rotational head movement that doesn't produce immediate visible symptoms. The adrenaline of the crash can mask pain for hours, and cervical spine injuries and concussions often don't become fully apparent until the following morning or days later. Seeking prompt medical evaluation and maintaining continuous treatment is critical to preserving both the claim and the evidence of harm.

Proving Right-Of-Way Disputes When Both Drivers Tell Different Stories

When both drivers have lawyers and both lawyers have clients insisting they had the right of way, the case comes down to the physical evidence. Our attorneys pursue that evidence immediately, before EDR data is overwritten, before traffic cameras cycle, and before signal timing records are purged from traffic management systems that don't maintain data indefinitely.

Since 1993, our firm has recovered [over \\$1 billion for Georgia crash victims](#) and their families. Left-turn cases are among the most litigated crash types in Georgia, and we know every argument the defense raises because we've answered all of them.

We represent Georgia injury victims on a contingency fee basis, which means you owe nothing until we've secured a recovery for you. No upfront costs, no hourly rate, and no fee of any kind unless we win. If a left-turn crash injured you or someone in your family, [contact us](#) today for a free consultation.