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Leaving the Scene of an Accident

“ACCIDENT n. An inevitable occurrence due to the action of immutable natural laws.”—Ambrose Bierce

Accidents Involving Death or Injuries

The driver of a vehicle involved in an accident resulting in injury or death must immediately stop his vehicle at the scene of the accident, or as close to the accident scene as possible and immediately return to the scene.

The driver must remain at the scene of the accident until he has given certain required information and has rendered reasonable assistance to any person injured in the accident. The driver must give his name and address and the registration number of the vehicle he was driving. On request, the driver must show his driver license to the person struck or to the driver or occupants of the vehicle collided with. The driver must also make arrangements for the carrying of an injured person to a physician, surgeon or hospital for medical or surgical treatment if it is apparent that treatment is necessary, or if the transportation is requested by the injured person.

The driver must give notice of the accident immediately by the quickest means of communication (by cell phone, if possible), to the proper law enforcement agency. The law enforcement officer who investigates the accident will prepare a written accident report.

Accidents Involving Only Damage to a Vehicle

The driver of a vehicle involved in an accident resulting only in damage to a vehicle that is driven must immediately stop at the scene of the accident, or as close to the accident scene as possible and immediately return to the scene. The driver must remain at the accident scene until he has given the required information to the other driver (see discussion above). The stop must be made without obstructing traffic more than is necessary.

If the vehicle struck is unattended (*e.g.*, in a parking lot), the driver must immediately stop and either: 1) locate and notify the operator or owner of his name and address, and the name and address of the owner of his vehicle, or 2) leave a note containing that information in a conspicuous place on the vehicle that was struck.

Failure to Stop

If a driver fails to stop and fulfill his legal obligations at the scene of an accident involving death or personal injuries, he is guilty of a felony. If he fails to stop and fulfill his legal obligations at the scene of an accident involving only property damage, he is guilty of a misdemeanor. In either case, failure to stop at the scene of an accident is a criminal offense, punishable by jail time and/or a fine.

In addition to the criminal penalties, a driver may lose his driving privileges for failing to stop and fulfill his legal obligations. The Department of Transportation will revoke the driving privileges, for five years, of a driver convicted of failing to stop at the scene of an accident involving death or serious physical injury, and for three years of a driver convicted of failing to stop at the scene of an accident resulting in an injury other than death or serious physical injury. In a case involving only property damage, the court may order the Department to suspend his license for one year.