

Left-Turn Accident Liability in Alabama

Why a Left Turn Puts a Driver's Fault in Question Before the Crash Even Happens

A driver waiting to turn left onto Airport Boulevard, watching for a gap in oncoming traffic, makes a judgment call in a matter of seconds. When that judgment turns out to be wrong and a collision follows, Alabama law starts the fault analysis from a specific legal presumption rather than a blank slate. An [Alabama left-turn accident lawyer](#) sees this pattern constantly: the turning driver is treated as the likely at-fault party from the outset, even when the facts tell a more complicated story.

Alabama's Right-of-Way Law for Left Turns

Alabama Code requires a driver turning left to yield the right-of-way to oncoming traffic before completing the turn. When a collision occurs between a left-turning vehicle and an oncoming vehicle, this statute creates a strong initial presumption that the turning driver failed to yield properly.

That presumption shifts depending on the type of turn. An unprotected left turn, made on a standard green light while yielding to oncoming traffic, places the full yielding obligation on the turning driver. A protected left turn, made on a dedicated green arrow, works differently, since oncoming traffic is supposed to be stopped at a red light during that phase.

The distinction matters because it changes where the analysis starts. A crash during a protected turn raises questions about whether the oncoming driver ran the light, while a crash during an unprotected turn starts by asking whether the turning driver had a genuinely safe opportunity to complete the maneuver.

When the Left-Turning Driver Isn't Actually at Fault

The presumption against a left-turning driver is not absolute, and several specific circumstances can rebut it entirely or shift a meaningful share of fault onto the oncoming driver. Proving these circumstances is often the difference between a denied claim and a fair settlement.

- **The Oncoming Driver Was [Speeding](#):** Excessive speed can make a turn that was reasonable at the posted speed limit appear unsafe only because the oncoming vehicle covered the distance faster than expected.
- **The Oncoming Driver Ran a Red Light or Stale Yellow:** A driver turning on a protected green arrow bears no fault if a crossing vehicle unlawfully entered the intersection against its own signal.

- **The Oncoming Vehicle Made an Unsafe Lane Change:** A driver merging into the turning driver's path immediately before impact can eliminate any reasonable opportunity the turning driver had to avoid the crash.
- **A Traffic Signal Malfunction Occurred:** Miscalibrated or malfunctioning turn signals can create a genuine and reasonable belief that a turn was protected when it was not.
- **Obstructed Visibility Played a Role:** Parked vehicles, construction equipment, or poor roadway design can block a turning driver's view of oncoming traffic through no fault of their own.

Each of these scenarios depends on specific, time-sensitive evidence, which is exactly why gathering that evidence early carries so much weight in how a left-turn claim ultimately gets resolved.

Why Alabama's Contributory Negligence Rule Makes This Fight High-Stakes

Alabama's pure contributory negligence rule bars an injured person from recovering anything at all if they are found even 1% at fault for a crash. That rule collides directly with the presumption already working against a left-turning driver, since the starting legal assumption and the harshest possible penalty for shared fault both point in the same direction.

A turning driver who was going even slightly above a reasonable speed while completing the turn can hand an insurer an argument for partial fault, even when the oncoming driver bears substantially more responsibility for causing the crash. That combination turns left-turn cases into some of the most contested liability fights in Alabama injury law, since insurers know how little shared fault it takes to eliminate a claim entirely.

The Evidence That Actually Decides These Cases

Left-turn liability disputes are rarely resolved on driver testimony alone, since both drivers typically believe they had the right-of-way. Traffic signal timing data, intersection camera footage, and event data recorder readings from either vehicle often provide the clearest picture of what actually happened in the seconds before impact.

Accident reconstruction can establish the oncoming vehicle's speed and distance from the intersection at the moment the turn began, which is frequently the single most contested fact in these cases. A reconstruction showing the oncoming vehicle was traveling well above the speed limit can completely change the liability analysis, even when the police report at the scene initially placed fault on the turning driver.

This evidence disappears quickly. Intersection camera footage and traffic signal logs are commonly overwritten or deleted within days or weeks, which means the strongest evidence in a left-turn case is often gone long before a lawsuit would ever need to be filed.

Common Injuries in Left-Turn Collisions

Left-turn crashes typically produce [T-bone or broadside impacts](#), and the struck vehicle's door and side panel offer far less structural protection than the front or rear of a car. That difference in crash protection tends to produce more severe injuries than a comparable rear-end collision.

- **Chest and Rib Fractures:** Direct side impact concentrates crash force against the ribcage with little structural buffer to absorb it.
- **Pelvic and Hip Fractures:** The door and side panel sit close to the pelvis, making fractures common even in moderate-speed collisions.
- **[Traumatic Brain Injuries](#):** The head can strike the window, door frame, or center pillar as the body is thrown sideways on impact.
- **Internal Organ Damage:** The abdomen and torso absorb concentrated force in a broadside hit, increasing the risk of internal bleeding and organ trauma.
- **Spinal and Neck Injuries:** The sideways motion of a T-bone collision twists the spine in ways a frontal or rear impact does not, raising the risk of disc and vertebral injury.

Symptoms from several of these injuries, particularly internal organ damage and spinal trauma, do not always appear immediately, which makes prompt medical evaluation important even when a driver initially feels only shaken up after the crash.

This May Be Your Only Chance to Get Justice. Let's Make It Count.

Getting blamed for a crash you didn't cause is its own kind of injury. [Dean Waite & Associates, LLC](#) has more than 25 years of combined attorney experience picking apart the kind of split-second liability disputes that insurance adjusters would rather settle quickly and cheaply, and our team has [recovered over \\$150,000,000](#) doing exactly that for Alabama families. You won't pay us a dime out of pocket, and you won't owe us anything at all if we don't win. If a left-turn presumption is being used against you unfairly, [reach out now](#), before the footage that could clear your name gets erased.