

Common Causes of Motorcycle Accidents in Pennsylvania and Who Is Liable

Pittsburgh Motorcycle Accident Lawyers Expose Bias Against Riders

[Motorcycle crashes](#) happen for many different reasons, but many patterns show up again and again in Pennsylvania crash reports. A driver never saw the motorcycle at all. A left-turning or lane-changing driver often insists the rider came out of nowhere. Or perhaps another driver failed to yield and crashed into a motorcyclist.

Worst of all, motorcycle accidents continue to happen at an alarming rate. Motorcyclists are far more likely to die in crashes per vehicle mile traveled than passenger car occupants, according to the [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration \(NHTSA\)](#). Certain recent years have even recorded some of the highest numbers of motorcycle accident fatalities in decades.

And what makes these crashes so frustrating is that motorcyclists are often wrongly blamed for causing such collisions. Our Pittsburgh motorcycle accident lawyers at [Romanow Law Group](#) have seen how quickly insurance companies shift blame onto injured riders. That's why it's important for injured riders and their families to understand how fault gets determined and why that matters when it comes to being financially compensated.

What Are Common Causes of Motorcycle Accidents in Pennsylvania?

Motorcycle crashes rarely happen without a specific, identifiable reason behind them. Recognizing these patterns helps show that a crash usually traces back to a provable mistake by another driver. Common causes of motorcycle crashes involving other drivers include:

- **Left turns across oncoming traffic** – A driver waiting to turn left has to judge the speed and distance of an oncoming motorcycle. Many drivers misjudge that gap or miss the rider inside it completely.
- **Lane splitting misconceptions** – Riding between two lanes of traffic is [illegal in Pennsylvania](#). But insurance companies sometimes wrongly accuse a rider of lane splitting simply because the rider was positioned near one side of a single, legal lane.
- **Unsafe lane changes** – A driver who changes lanes without checking a mirror or blind spot violates a basic duty to confirm the lane is clear. That failure often ends with a sideswiped motorcyclist.
- **Failure to yield the right-of-way** – A driver who ignores a motorcyclist's right-of-way at a stop sign or intersection is usually the one at fault.

- **Distracted driving** – A driver looking at a phone or dashboard screen for even a few seconds can miss a motorcycle entirely. Cell phone records or dashcam footage can later confirm exactly what pulled their attention away.
- **Following too closely** – A driver tailgating a motorcyclist has less time to stop if the rider slows down. A rear-end crash in this situation is usually not the rider's fault.
- **Opening a car door into traffic** – A parked driver who opens a door without checking for an approaching motorcycle can cause a severe crash. Pennsylvania law places that responsibility on the driver who opened the door.

Pinpointing exactly which mistake occurred matters a great deal in a motorcycle case. It directly shapes how much blame a driver has to accept and how much compensation a rider can recover.

Who Is Liable for Motorcycle Accidents?

Liable is a legal term used to describe who is legally responsible for an accident and the resulting damages. In many motorcycle crashes, the liable party is the other driver who acted carelessly and caused the collision. That could mean turning left into a rider's path, or simply failing to check a blind spot before changing lanes.

Liability is rarely as simple as one driver admitting fault at the scene. Insurance companies conduct their own investigation. They often reach a very different conclusion than the police officer who wrote the initial report. More than one party can even share liability for the same crash.

A great deal of money often rides on how liability gets decided. Determining it the right way matters just as much as determining it quickly. The sections below explain exactly how that process works for an injured motorcyclist in Pennsylvania, starting with who actually makes that decision.

Who Decides Who's Liable for Causing My Pennsylvania Motorcycle Accident?

An insurance adjuster is usually the first person to form an opinion about liability. That adjuster works for the insurance company, not for the injured rider. Their assessment reflects the company's financial interests as much as it reflects the actual facts of the crash, and that bias shapes the very first offer a rider sees.

A claim that cannot be resolved through negotiation may move into a lawsuit instead. If the case ultimately goes to trial, a judge or jury decides the question rather than an insurance adjuster. They weigh the evidence presented by both sides and decide how much responsibility each driver bears for the crash.

An adjuster's early opinion can shape settlement offers long before a case ever reaches a courtroom. Riders benefit from building strong evidence from the very first day after a crash. That evidence carries weight with adjusters and juries alike, and it rarely improves with time.

Can I Be Compensated for My Pennsylvania Motorcycle Crash If I Was Partly at Fault?

Yes. Pennsylvania law allows an injured rider to recover compensation even when the rider shares some responsibility for the crash. This rule exists because fault is rarely one hundred percent on one side in a real collision, and the law recognizes that reality instead of punishing every rider equally.

The key limit is how much fault gets assigned to the rider. Compensation remains available as long as a rider's share of fault stays at 50 percent or below, just reduced by that percentage. A rider found more than 50 percent at fault loses the right to recover anything at all.

This rule gives many injured riders a real path to compensation. That holds true even in messy crashes where both drivers made questionable decisions before the collision happened. The next section explains exactly how Pennsylvania calculates that fault percentage in practice, and why the math matters so much.

How Does Pennsylvania's Comparative Negligence Law Impact Motorcycle Injury Claims?

Pennsylvania follows a modified comparative negligence rule under [42 Pa.C.S. Section 7102](#). Comparative negligence is a legal rule that reduces a person's compensation based on their own percentage of fault. This rule applies to motorcycle injury claims throughout the state, from Pittsburgh to Philadelphia.

When a rider is found partly at fault, their compensation gets reduced by that exact percentage. A rider found 20 percent at fault in a claim otherwise worth 100,000 dollars would recover 80,000 dollars instead. This often depends on many factors, including how clearly the evidence shows what each driver did before the crash occurred.

The stakes of a single fault percentage point can be high. Insurance companies frequently argue for a higher rider fault percentage than the evidence actually supports. Every point shifted onto the rider lowers what the company ultimately has to pay on the claim.

What If I'm Wrongly Blamed for Causing My Motorcycle Crash?

Motorcyclists face a kind of bias that car drivers rarely encounter. Many people assume a rider must have been speeding or weaving simply because a crash involved a

motorcycle. This assumption can come from adjusters, jurors or even the police officer writing the report at the scene.

An insurance company has a financial incentive to lean into that bias. Every percentage point of fault shifted onto the rider lowers the amount the company ultimately has to pay. This holds true regardless of what the physical evidence from the crash scene actually shows.

A rider who accepts an unfair blame assignment can end up settling for far less than a case is worth. Independent evidence should determine how fault gets divided after a crash. Assumptions about motorcyclists in general should never be allowed to fill that role instead.

What Evidence Helps Prove a Driver Is at Fault for Hitting a Motorcyclist?

Motorcyclists face built-in bias, so strong evidence matters even more in these cases than in a typical car accident claim. A police report alone often reflects the investigating officer's first impression at the scene. That impression can be shaped by the same assumptions insurance adjusters rely on later.

Traffic camera footage, dashcam video, and nearby business surveillance can capture the actual moment of impact. This footage can show exactly where the motorcycle was and how fast it was traveling. Accident reconstruction experts can also analyze skid marks, debris fields, and vehicle damage to recreate the crash.

Witness statements carry particular weight in motorcycle cases. An independent bystander has no reason to blame the rider by default. Gathering this evidence quickly matters, since surveillance footage is often overwritten within days of a crash, and memories of what happened fade just as fast.

Who Else Can Be Liable for a Pennsylvania Motorcycle Accident?

The driver who caused the crash is not always the only party who can be held responsible. Other parties may share liability for a rider's injuries depending on the circumstances.

- **The vehicle owner** - If the driver was operating a car owned by someone else, the owner's insurance policy may provide an additional source of compensation in certain circumstances.
- **An employer** - A driver who caused a crash while working, such as making a delivery, may make their employer liable for the resulting damages.
- **A government agency** - Poor road maintenance, missing signage, or a broken traffic signal may create a potential claim against the government agency responsible for the roadway.

- **A parts manufacturer** - A defective vehicle component, such as a failed brake system, can shift responsibility onto the manufacturer of that part.

Identifying every liable party can significantly increase the total compensation available in a serious motorcycle accident claim. A thorough investigation early on helps make sure no responsible party gets overlooked. That includes any available insurance policy that could help cover a rider's medical bills, lost income and long-term care.

How Can a Pittsburgh Motorcycle Accident Attorney Help Me?

Motorcycle accident cases in Pittsburgh often involve more than a simple dispute over who ran a red light. Bias against riders and aggressive comparative negligence arguments can quickly complicate a claim. And multiple potentially liable parties can turn a straightforward case into a drawn-out legal battle.

Our Pittsburgh motorcycle accident lawyers at [Romanow Law Group](#) investigate every crash independently. We never simply accept a driver's version of events or a police report's first impression. We carefully gather evidence and consult accident reconstruction experts if necessary. And we push back hard when an insurance company tries to artificially inflate a rider's share of fault.

Put your trust in a Pittsburgh law firm that aggressively represents injured motorcyclists. [Contact us](#) for a free consultation. Our dedicated legal team can answer your questions, explain your options and get right to work on your motorcycle accident claim or lawsuit.