

Top 10 Causes of Car Accidents in Maine

A Portland car accident lawyer can protect your rights after a crash

If you spend much time on Maine roads, you already know they keep you guessing. One minute you're gliding along a quiet two-lane framed by pines, and the next you crest a hill into fog, frost heaves, a moose on the shoulder, or a summer convoy of rental SUVs looking for the next lighthouse.

That mix of rural highways, long winters, and seasonal tourism makes Maine's [car accident](#) patterns a little different than many other states. Here's what you need to know about the ten most common causes of crashes here, how fault is evaluated, and what evidence actually helps if you're injured by a negligent driver.

1. Winter weather and black ice

Maine's winter is not just snow. The freeze-thaw rhythm breeds black ice on bridges, shaded curves, and coastal stretches where sea air hangs heavy. Typical scenarios include a loss of control on an overpass, a slide through a stop at a rural T-intersection, or a chain-reaction crash when the first driver taps the brakes on glare ice.

While winter weather alone is not a cause of crashes, fault typically lies on drivers who travel at unsafe and unreasonable speeds or follow other vehicles too closely. In this case, evidence includes dashcam video, road treatment logs, and weather records from the date and time of the crash.

2. Distracted driving, including navigation

Phones, touchscreens, and navigation apps pull eyes off the road anywhere, but the problem is worse when visitors are hunting for a trailhead or photo stop. The classic pattern in Maine is a slow lane drift over the centerline on a two-lane or a rear-end crash when someone looks down to check a turn.

Fault analysis often involves handheld use, app activity, infotainment logs, and witness statements. If you're hurt in a distracted driving crash, a Maine lawyer can subpoena phone metadata and other digital records early, since carriers don't keep it forever.

3. Speeding and unsafe speed for conditions

The posted limit is not a shield when conditions are bad. On rural highways where sightlines are long, it is easy to creep up in speed and then have no margin when a deer, frost heave, or patch of ice appears.

Many serious Maine crashes are lane departures and run-off-road events that start with too much speed for the moment. This can lead to head-on collisions, single-vehicle accidents, and even pedestrians getting struck when a driver veers off the road.

When determining fault, reconstruction experts look at the vehicle's event data recorder, tire marks, crush damage, and sight distance to piece together what happened.

4. Impaired driving from alcohol, drugs, and medications

Operating under the influence remains a common factor in serious crashes. Because nightlife in Maine is spread out and late-night transit options are limited, drivers are often tempted to get behind the wheel when they shouldn't.

Additionally, medications that cause drowsiness or slow reactions add another layer, especially for older drivers. Evidence in impaired driving cases includes officer observations, field tests, toxicology, and sometimes bar or restaurant receipts in potential dram shop cases.

5. Wildlife collisions with deer and moose

Wildlife is part of life here, but on the road it can be dangerous. Moose collisions are far less common than deer strikes, yet they are disproportionately severe. Their height means you may not see eye reflection in headlights, and the weight of a moose can push a vehicle's roof back into the cabin.

Maine transportation authorities warn that moose collisions [spike in May and June](#), with a secondary bump in autumn. That seasonality catches travelers off guard and leads to severe impacts and secondary crashes when drivers swerve into oncoming lanes or fixed objects.

The animal is not considered "at fault." However, drivers are still expected to maintain control and may be found negligent if their response—such as swerving into oncoming traffic—causes additional crashes. Photos of the scene, hair or biological material on the vehicle, light conditions, and statements about evasive maneuvers matter when establishing liability in these cases.

6. Failure to yield and left-turn crashes at unsignalized intersections

Rural, rolling terrain and tall vegetation can limit sight distance at driveways and side roads. Many serious crashes happen when a driver accepts a gap that isn't really there, or stops short in the travel lane while hesitating through a left turn.

Fault typically hinges on right-of-way rules, whether a full stop was made, and whether the driver could have seen approaching traffic.

7. Following too closely and sudden stops

Maine tourists often slow down to take photos. A driver brakes at the surprise frost heave. A deer darts. On low-traction surfaces, the stopping distance stretches, and the rear-end crash becomes a pileup.

Rear-end collisions are common when drivers fail to use a three to four second following rule on dry surfaces or double it on snow or ice. When determining fault in these cases, a crash reconstruction expert might look for impact location, whether brake lights worked, and dashcam footage to sort spacing and reaction time.

8. Fatigue and drowsy driving

Long, quiet overnight stretches can lull anyone, especially shift workers or seasonal employees. With the [days getting shorter](#), fatigue might become more commonplace on Maine roads.

Drift-off-road crashes with no braking are a red flag for fatigue. Evidence can include toll or receipt timelines and event data showing no pre-impact braking.

9. Work zones and rough roadway conditions

Short construction seasons mean busy work zones in warm months. With the frost heaves, gravel patches, and potholes, it's easy for drivers to lose control, especially around construction zones.

According to the [Maine Department of Transportation](#), an average of 500 work zone crashes happen each year across the state. Responsibility can be shared in these cases. Drivers are expected to slow down and respect cones and tapers. But contractors and agencies must set up zones correctly.

10. Inexperienced drivers and seasonal traffic patterns

Teen drivers, out-of-state visitors, and renters unfamiliar with four-way stop rules or how vehicles handle on gravel roads show up in many summer crash reports. Panic braking on loose surfaces and confusion at rural intersections often lead to rear-ends and side-impact crashes.

When visitors or inexperienced drivers make a mistake due to unfamiliar road conditions, they can still be held liable if they violated traffic laws or drove in a way considered "unreasonable" for the circumstances. In some cases, liability may be shared, such as when one driver braked abruptly on loose gravel and another was following too closely behind.

Where are the most dangerous spots in Maine for car accidents?

Car accidents can happen anywhere in Maine. But some spots are especially hazardous, especially for drivers who don't know the area. These include:

- **US Route 1:** This is considered Maine's most dangerous road due to winding coastal routes, heavy seasonal traffic, and frequent weather hazards.
- **Interstate 95:** This interstate is among the state's deadliest highways, and Wells-to-Kennebunk has long been among the state's deadliest stretches, logging at least 15 fatal crashes between 2000 and 2019.
- **State Routes 15 and 201:** These two routes are especially hazardous because of narrow lanes, poor lighting, deteriorating pavement, and wildlife crossings.
- **The intersection of Route 202 and Beech Hill Road in Auburn:** This is one of Maine's most dangerous intersections, with frequent failure-to-yield crashes.
- **The intersection of State Route 139 and US 2 in Norridgewock:** This is known for a high number of accidents in central Maine.
- **The Alfred Road and Main Street roundabout in Sanford:** This location ranks among [MaineDOT's top 25 intersections](#) with the highest crash counts.

What should I do if I'm in a car accident in Maine?

If you're in a car accident in Maine, your first priority is safety. Call 911 right away so police and medical responders can secure the scene. Don't leave until law enforcement arrives, since their official crash report will be key evidence later. While waiting, gather as much information as you can by taking photos of the vehicles, the road, and your injuries, and collect contact details from the other driver and any witnesses.

After you've taken these immediate steps, your next move should be consulting an experienced Portland, Maine car accident lawyer. [Romanow Law Group](#) understands what you're going through and knows what steps you should take next. Our compassionate attorneys are here to make sure your voice is heard, your rights are protected, and the insurance companies don't take advantage of you.

We fight for maximum compensation so you can focus on what really matters: your health and recovery. With our law firm on your side, you'll have a relentless advocate who knows how to build a strong case, negotiate with insurance companies, and, if necessary, stand up for you in court.

[Contact us](#) today for a free consultation, and let us help you take the first step toward rebuilding your life.