

When the Police Report Is Wrong After a Car Accident

An experienced lawyer can help correct errors in a Pennsylvania accident report

Police reports influence nearly every part of a Pennsylvania accident claim. Insurance companies treat them as a primary source of truth when deciding who caused the crash. Small errors in the report can shift fault, decrease compensation, or create disputes that delay the entire process.

Many people assume a police report is final, but inaccuracies are common and can be corrected when handled properly. Guidance from a [Pittsburgh car accident lawyer](#) can make this process far less overwhelming for someone dealing with injuries and insurance pressure.

Mistakes happen because reports are created under stressful, fast-moving circumstances. Officers arrive after the crash, not during it, which means they must piece together information from shaken drivers, injured passengers, and incomplete witness accounts. When the information is wrong, victims pay the price unless the errors are addressed quickly and strategically.

Correcting a [police report](#) is possible, but it requires organized evidence, a clear understanding of the correction process, and persistence with the responding agency. With experienced support, the process becomes easier to manage and the final claim becomes stronger.

Why police accident reports can contain mistakes

Police reports are not perfect reconstructions of what happened. Officers must make decisions based on limited information that is often incomplete. They may be working in bad weather, directing traffic, or dealing with medical emergencies while trying to interview multiple people at once. This environment leads to errors that can significantly damage a victim's claim if left uncorrected.

In many crashes, the injured person is too hurt or disoriented to give a full account. If they are transported by EMS, the officer relies on the other driver's version of events, which can cause bias or unbalanced reporting. Even small gaps in communication can result in misquoted statements or assumptions that later influence the determination of fault.

Additionally, officers are trained to handle criminal investigations, traffic control, and safety issues. They are not accident reconstruction experts. Their diagrams or conclusions may be based on quick observations, not detailed analysis. These limitations are common, but understanding them helps victims recognize why corrections matter.

Common types of errors found in Pennsylvania accident reports

When a victim identifies the type of error, it becomes easier to determine what evidence is needed and how to request correction. Each error affects the claim in different ways, and some have a more significant impact on fault than others. Types of errors include:

- **Misstated or misquoted driver statements:** Officers often summarize what each driver said rather than recording exact phrasing. A misunderstood statement can make a victim appear responsible when they were not.
- **Incorrect crash diagrams or vehicle positions:** Quick sketches can show the wrong lane, direction, or point of impact. These diagrams are frequently used by insurers to argue fault.
- **Missing or unidentified witnesses:** If a witness leaves before speaking with the officer, their information may never be included, even when their account supports the victim.
- **Wrong location, time, or roadway conditions:** Clerical details matter because they influence the reconstruction of the crash and how adjusters interpret causation.
- **Errors in traffic citations or listed violations:** An incorrect citation can shift blame and weaken a claim, even when the underlying facts do not support the violation.
- **Incomplete documentation of injuries:** Officers often mark “no injury” if a victim appears mobile. This becomes a problem when symptoms surface hours or days later.

Identifying the right category helps victims and their advocates approach the correction process more effectively and avoid mistakes that weaken their claim.

How incorrect police reports influence insurance decisions and fault

Insurance adjusters rely heavily on police reports when determining fault under Pennsylvania’s [modified comparative negligence rules](#). If the report inaccurately suggests a victim contributed to the crash, the insurer may reduce compensation or deny the claim outright. A victim found more than 51 percent at fault cannot recover any damages at all in Pennsylvania.

These errors also influence settlement value. When an insurer believes the report supports the other driver’s version of events, negotiations become harder and victims face pressure to accept low offers. A single incorrect detail can affect compensation for medical bills, lost wages, long-term treatment needs, and pain and suffering.

Courts, arbitrators, and mediators may also review police reports when evaluating a claim. Even if the report is not the only piece of evidence, its influence is strong. Correcting inaccuracies early prevents misunderstandings that can snowball into larger legal and financial problems.

Steps to take when you notice a mistake in a Pennsylvania accident report

Correcting a police report requires careful documentation, clear communication, and timely action. The process is not complicated when handled properly, but many victims find it overwhelming while recovering from injuries. Here are some steps to take if you notice a mistake:

- **Obtain the full crash report, not just the exchange sheet:** The exchange sheet does not include witness names, diagrams, narratives, or officer conclusions. Victims often miss errors because they only receive this shorter document.
- **Gather supporting evidence:** Photographs, dashcam footage, surveillance videos, medical records, and vehicle damage documentation can support a correction. Insurers rely on evidence, and officers may require proof before adding a supplemental note.
- **Contact the officer politely, clearly, and in writing:** Most corrections begin by submitting a written request to the officer who prepared the report. This ensures there is a record of the request and helps prevent misunderstandings.
- **Provide new or overlooked witness information:** Witness statements can correct misinterpretations or flawed assumptions in the report. Officers may add supplemental entries to include them.
- **Request a supplemental report, not a full rewrite:** Officers rarely revise the original document. Instead, they add supplemental information that insurers and attorneys can use in negotiations.
- **Keep a paper trail:** Every email, record, and request matters. A clear documentation trail helps establish credibility when insurers evaluate the claim.

This process is far easier when an experienced Pittsburgh car accident lawyer manages communication with police departments and insurance adjusters. Proper handling ensures the right information gets added and the victim's version of events is accurately represented.

When the police refuse to change the report

Sometimes officers decline to make corrections, especially when the disagreement involves subjective issues like fault. In these cases, the goal shifts to creating a counter-record that insurers cannot ignore.

Victims can submit written statements, affidavits, photos, and third-party evidence showing what actually happened. Crash reconstruction experts may be used when technical analysis contradicts the officer's assumptions. Even without official changes, this evidence can be powerful.

Insurers will consider supplemental materials during the liability evaluation process, and courts accept them as part of the case record. A declined correction request does not end the victim's ability to challenge the report's accuracy. It simply requires a different strategy.

The role of evidence in challenging an incorrect report

Independent evidence often carries more weight than the police report. Videos, photos, data, and medical records can reveal details the officer missed or misunderstood. When used correctly, this evidence can correct mistakes that would otherwise shift fault or reduce compensation.

Important evidence that can support a police report correction may include:

- **Traffic, dashcam, and surveillance footage:** Shows vehicle movement, impact points, and traffic signal status.
- **Doorbell camera footage:** Captures angles or moments the officer never saw.
- **Vehicle data recorder information:** Provides braking, steering, and speed data at the time of the crash.
- **Roadway and debris photos:** Helps reconstruct how and where the impact occurred.
- **Vehicle damage photos:** Reveals force, direction, and impact alignment.
- **Medical records and early treatment notes:** Counter "no injury" notations and prove immediate symptoms.
- **Witness statements:** Fill gaps in the report and correct inaccurate narratives.

Having the right evidence strengthens any correction request and makes insurers take the dispute seriously, which is much easier with knowledgeable support guiding the process.

An experienced lawyer can help correct mistakes and move your case forward

Correcting mistakes in a police report is essential to protecting your right to recover compensation. An attorney from [Romanow Law Group](#) can guide you through the process every step of the way. Our firm gives injured crash victims immediate support by gathering evidence, communicating with police departments, and negotiating with insurance companies. [Contact us](#) today and get the guidance needed to correct the record and move your case forward.