

Why Intersection Crashes Are So Deadly in Pennsylvania

Our Pittsburgh Car Accident Lawyers Build Strong Cases That Get Results

Pittsburgh intersections can be very dangerous, even if you do everything right. Perhaps you had a green light. You checked your mirrors, eased into the intersection and followed all the rules of the road. Then a driver runs a red light at full speed or passes illegally and slams head-on into your vehicle. These kinds of Pittsburgh [car accidents](#) happen all the time without warning, leaving you with mounting medical bills, insurance calls and complicated legal issues.

Just how common are these car accidents? According to the [Pennsylvania Department of Transportation \(PennDOT\)](#), intersections account for more than a third of all reportable crashes across the state each year. PennDOT data also show that thousands of Pennsylvania crashes each year involve a driver who entered an intersection without the right to do so, whether by running a red light, blowing through a stop sign or failing to yield to oncoming traffic.

Our Pittsburgh car accident lawyers at [Romanow Law Group](#) have spent years reconstructing intersection crashes for injured clients across Pittsburgh and the surrounding communities. We know how quickly insurance companies try to shift blame after a crash like this, and we know how to use traffic camera footage, event data and other evidence to show what really happened. Here's what makes intersection crashes in Pennsylvania so dangerous, and how fault gets established when a driver causes an intersection accident.

What Driver Failures Cause the Most Dangerous Intersection Crashes?

Every driver approaching an intersection carries the same basic duty of care (the legal obligation to act with reasonable caution toward others on the road) – follow the signal, come to a complete stop where required and yield when another vehicle has the right of way. Most intersection crashes trace back to one driver breaking that duty in one of a few predictable and preventable ways.

- **Running a red light** – A driver who enters an intersection after the signal has turned red often does so out of impatience or distraction, and cross traffic frequently has no time to react before impact.
- **Blowing through a stop sign** – Treating a stop sign as a rolling suggestion rather than a full stop sends a vehicle into cross traffic that is already moving at full speed.
- **Failing to yield the right of way** – Misjudging the speed or distance of an oncoming vehicle during a left turn or a merge puts a driver directly in the path of traffic that has the legal right to proceed first.

A driver who runs a red light, rolls through a stop sign or misjudges another vehicle's right of way puts you in a position with almost no time to brake or steer clear. If you were hurt at an

intersection, the specific way the other driver broke the rules often shapes how we build your claim, from the evidence we gather to the argument we make about responsibility.

Why Does Failing to Yield Cause Such Severe Damage?

Failing to yield is not just a paperwork violation. It changes the physics of the crash itself. When two vehicles collide at an intersection, they typically approach from angles close to 90 degrees, which means the full force of both vehicles gets concentrated on a small section of each car rather than spread across a bumper built to absorb impact.

A driver traveling through a green light at 35 miles per hour and a driver who fails to yield while turning at 20 miles per hour still create a combined force well beyond what either vehicle was designed to withstand safely. The door panel, not the front or rear crumple zones, usually takes the hit, and that panel sits just inches from the driver or passenger inside.

This is why so many intersection crashes caused by a failure to yield result in side-impact injuries rather than the whiplash typically associated with rear-end collisions. The occupant closest to the point of impact often absorbs the worst of the force, and even a crash at moderate speed can cause injuries that take weeks to fully reveal themselves.

How Do Red Light and Stop Sign Violations Differ in Fault?

Signalized intersections and stop-sign intersections tend to produce different kinds of evidence, and that difference matters when it comes to proving fault. A signal violation often has a clear timestamp. Some Pennsylvania municipalities operate red-light camera programs, and even without a citation, signal timing records can show exactly when a light changed and how long a driver had to react.

Stop-sign violations are harder to document because there is rarely a camera watching a residential intersection. Fault usually comes down to skid marks, vehicle damage patterns, 911 call timing and what witnesses saw in the seconds before the crash. A driver who claims they stopped completely may still be contradicted by the physical evidence at the scene.

Neither type of violation guarantees an easy claim. Insurance companies routinely argue that a driver who had a green light was still going too fast to avoid the crash, or that a driver who stopped at a sign still pulled out too soon. Building a strong case means anticipating those arguments before the other side makes them.

Why Are Older and Younger Drivers More Likely to Cause Intersection Crashes?

Not every driver faces the same risk at an intersection. PennDOT data consistently show that drivers age 65 and older are involved in intersection crashes at a noticeably higher rate than the average driver, often because judging the speed and distance of crossing traffic becomes more difficult with age and because intersections demand quick decisions under time pressure.

Younger and less experienced drivers show a different pattern. Distraction from a phone or a passenger, combined with limited experience reading the timing of a yellow light, leads to more red-light violations and to rear-end collisions triggered by sudden braking as another driver realizes too late that the light has changed.

This does not mean a driver's age determines fault in your case. It means the reasons behind an intersection crash vary widely from one collision to the next, and understanding why a driver failed to stop, yield or react in time often points us toward the evidence that will matter most when we build your claim.

What Injuries Commonly Result From Intersection Crashes?

The injuries from an intersection crash often depend on where the impact lands. A side-impact collision, sometimes called a T-bone crash (a collision on the side of a vehicle rather than the front or rear), tends to cause more severe harm than a typical rear-end crash because there is less structure between the occupant and the point of impact.

Common injuries include fractured ribs, collapsed lungs, head trauma and spinal injuries on the side of the body closest to the collision. Passengers in the back seat are not immune either, since the force of a side impact can transmit through the frame of the vehicle to injure anyone inside, regardless of where they were sitting.

Multi-vehicle intersection crashes add another layer of harm. A single violation, such as a driver running a red light, can trigger a chain reaction that pushes one car into another lane and causes a second or third collision. Sorting out which injuries came from which impact often requires a careful review of medical records alongside the physical evidence from the scene.

How Does Pennsylvania Law Determine Fault After an Intersection Crash?

Pennsylvania uses a negligence standard (a legal framework based on whether a person failed to act with reasonable care) to decide who pays for an intersection crash. To hold the other driver responsible, you generally need to show that they owed you a duty of care, breached that duty by violating a signal or a right-of-way rule, and caused your injuries as a direct result.

Pennsylvania also follows a modified comparative negligence rule (a system that reduces your compensation by your percentage of fault and bars recovery entirely once your fault reaches 51 percent). Suppose your damages (legal term for financial losses) total \$80,000 and you are found 15 percent at fault for entering the intersection a moment too soon. Your recovery would be reduced to \$68,000 rather than eliminated altogether.

Insurance companies know this rule well, and they often look for any small detail that lets them shift a larger share of the blame onto you. That is one of the biggest reasons intersection cases benefit from a lawyer who can gather independent evidence before the other side has a chance to shape the narrative.

What Evidence Proves Who Violated the Right of Way?

Proving who violated the right of way rarely comes down to one piece of evidence. Building a strong case usually means pulling together several sources that, taken as a whole, show exactly what happened in the seconds before the crash.

- **Traffic signal timing records** – Municipal traffic departments can show how long a light stayed green, yellow or red at the moment of the crash.
- **Red-light camera or dashcam footage** – Many intersections and vehicles now capture video that shows exactly which driver entered on a red light or failed to stop.
- **Event data recorder information** – Modern vehicles log speed, braking and steering data in the moments before a collision, often called the car's black box.
- **Police citations and crash reports** – An officer's on-scene findings about who was cited for a violation carry significant weight with insurance adjusters and juries alike.
- **Skid marks and vehicle damage patterns** – The location and angle of the damage on each vehicle can show which car entered the intersection first and at what speed.

None of these items tells the full story by itself. We gather as many of them as possible while they are still available, since traffic camera footage and event data recorder information can disappear within days unless someone requests it. The sooner we get involved, the more evidence we can secure before it is gone.

How Can a Pittsburgh Car Accident Lawyer Help After an Intersection Crash?

An intersection crash can leave you hurt, confused about who was at fault and facing an insurance adjuster building a case against you. Our Pittsburgh car accident attorneys at [Romanow Law Group](#) can step in immediately to secure signal records, camera footage and witness statements before they disappear, and push back against any attempts to blame you.

We work on a contingency fee basis, so you pay nothing upfront and nothing at all unless we recover compensation for you. From the moment you call, we start investigating the intersection where you were hurt, identifying every driver failure that contributed to the crash and building the strongest possible case for full compensation.

Pennsylvania generally gives you two years from the date of your crash to file a lawsuit under the state's [personal injury statute of limitations](#), and missing that deadline can end your right to recover anything at all. If you were hurt in an intersection crash, don't delay. [Contact us](#) today for a free consultation. We can help you demand justice in Pennsylvania.