

What you need to know about Texas hit-and-run crashes

There are many instances where a driver hits someone and flees the scene of the crash. This is known as a [hit-and-run](#) crash. These types of crashes are extremely difficult to solve when the at-fault driver is never identified. In far too many cases, crash victims are stuck with tens-of-thousands of dollars in medical bills and are unable to work and earn a paycheck.

When the at-fault driver leaves the scene of the crash, they also put the crash victim in greater danger. That's because a crash victim may be so severely injured that they can't call for help. Additionally, the area where a crash occurs may not have cellphone service.

Leaving the scene of a crash is [illegal in Texas](#) and the legal consequences are serious. For example:

- Leaving the scene of a crash that caused someone's death is a felony of the [second degree](#). Hit-and-run drivers can face up to 20 years in prison and a fine of up to \$10,000.
- Hit-and-runs involving an injury can result in a felony of the third degree. This can result in up to 10 years in prison and a fine of up to \$10,000.

Why do drivers flee the scene of a crash?

Drivers who flee the scene of a crash usually do so to evade the legal consequences of causing a crash or because they're uninsured. It's also common for hit-and-run drivers to flee the crash scene when they are:

- Under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Involved in criminal activity
- Fleeing from law enforcement

Hit-and-run drivers are also more likely to flee the scene of a crash after hitting a motorcyclist, bicyclist, or pedestrian. That's because they likely believe that a non-motorist will be unable to catch them. Plus, they are likely aware of the serious consequences they may face for hitting a non-motorist.

How do hit-and-run drivers get caught?

When pursuing a hit-and-run case, identifying the at-fault driver is the best possible outcome. Once the driver is identified, the driver's insurance company has an obligation to compensate you (that's assuming that the driver is insured).

Here are some reasons why a hit-and-run driver may be identified:

- A witness was able to get a description of the driver and/or the license plate number.
- The driver was caught on a surveillance camera or dash-cam.
- Police were able to quickly apprehend the driver.
- The driver's license plate or another vehicle part was left behind at the crash scene.
- The hit-and-run driver turned him or herself in to police.

What should I do if the driver doesn't get caught or is uninsured?

If the driver who hit you doesn't get caught or is uninsured, you're not completely out of options. When you purchase car insurance, your insurer must offer you uninsured and underinsured motorist coverage (UIM). This type of coverage isn't required in Texas, however. Drivers who don't want it must reject it in writing.

When you've been injured in a crash with a hit-and-run driver, your policy's collision coverage should pay for car damage. Some of your medical expenses can also be paid for if you have medical health coverage. But health insurance won't help much if you're out of work and in need of long-term care.

If you have UIM, it will pay for the additional costs not covered by your health insurance. Additionally, it will pay for property damage, lost wages, and pain and suffering.

You never know when you'll be involved in a hit-and-run crash. We urge you to purchase UIM coverage if you haven't already done so. Without it, you could find yourself paying for your medical expenses and other costs out-of-pocket.

How often do hit-and-runs happen in Texas?

In 2018, a study by AAA ranked [Texas No. 8](#) in the nation for having the most hit-and-run crashes. On the other hand, Texas didn't make the top 10 in a recent [study conducted by Insurify](#). The Insurify study found that Texas had roughly 3-4 drivers per 10,000 with a hit-and-run offense. Not all hit-and-run drivers get caught and convicted, however.

If you check the news headlines within the past week, you'll see that it's a common occurrence in Texas. For example:

- A woman was [recently killed](#) in a hit-and-run while jogging in Odessa.
- A hit-and-run [killed a man](#) walking on I-35 in New Braunfels.
- An 11-year-old boy was [hospitalized after a hit-and-run](#) in Killeen.
- A [bicyclist was killed](#) by a hit-and-run driver in Amarillo.

What to do after a hit-and-run crash

Should you be hit by a driver who fled the crash scene, it's important that you take these steps:

- Stay at the crash scene and don't attempt to follow the other driver. A hit-and-run driver may be dangerous.
- Call 911 immediately (if you're able to) and provide as many details as possible. This includes the license plate number, vehicle description, and/or description of the driver.
- Exchange contact information with any witnesses who stopped to help and ask them what they saw.
- Take pictures of the crash scene (if you're able to), including damage to your car and visible injuries.
- Take note of any nearby surveillance cameras.
- Report the crash to your insurance company, but only stick to the basic facts.
- See a doctor as soon as possible, even if you feel fine.
- Speak to an experienced Texas [car accident lawyer](#) to learn about your rights and legal options.

Contact our Texas law firm if you're a victim of a hit-and-run

If you or a loved one was injured in a hit-and-run crash, there is a lot at stake. That's why it's critical that you get a strong legal advocate on your side. The legal team at Smith & Hassler, Attorneys At Law will work tirelessly to get to the bottom of what happened. We'll conduct a thorough investigation by working with crash reconstruction experts, obtaining surveillance video footage, speaking to witnesses, and examining the official police report.

Our attorneys have more than 30 years of experience handling hit-and-run crash cases. We'll take the time to accurately tally up your damages and negotiate for a fair and full settlement. We operate on a contingency fee basis, which means you don't pay any upfront costs for our legal services. We can answer any questions you have and go over your legal options during a [free and confidential case evaluation](#).

[Contact us](#) online or call our Houston law office to get started.