

# How To Get Surveillance Camera Footage Of A Car Accident

## Houston Car Accident Attorneys Explain The Steps To Obtain Video Of Your Crash

Collecting video footage of a [car accident](#) caught by a surveillance camera, dashcam, or other recording device is often a hectic and complex task.

Identifying who owns the video, delaying its destruction, applying for a copy, and getting a positive response from the owner can be a time-consuming and meticulous process.

But it's important. Camera footage of a car accident can be critical evidence in your claim.

The following is a step-by-step guide on how to find and obtain camera footage of your car accident from a variety of sources. That said, the most important thing you can do is **contact us right away** so that we can intervene to preserve that camera footage before it's lost or overwritten. If you were injured in an accident, contact the Houston car accident lawyers at [Smith & Hassler, Attorneys at Law](#) for a free case evaluation.

### Check these sources for video of your car accident

In Texas, there are many types of camera footage that may contain evidence of your crash, including:

- **Highway, traffic, or intersection cameras.** The Texas Department of Transportation ([TxDOT](#)) and related government authorities operate surveillance cameras for research and security. They may require a formal application or subpoena to release the footage.
- **Dashcams.** More and more personal and commercial drivers are using dashcams to record the roadway in front of them every time they drive. Without direction or experience, tracking down dashcam footage can be like searching for a needle in a haystack. Skilled car accident lawyers know how to do this.
- **Property surveillance cameras.** Getting footage from a private property owner at a residence, business, event space, or other location may seem straightforward, but it is not always. The person who uses the property may not be the owner and may not have the authority to provide you with a video copy.
- **Social media.** Sometimes video of car accidents winds up on social media platforms like YouTube, TikTok, Twitter, or Facebook. Whether it was taken by a bystander or unintentionally recorded by a surveillance camera, typically, social media videos are not hard to obtain and download – if you can find them.
- **Stationary news traffic cameras.** Some TV news organizations install 24-hour cameras pointed at significant areas of traffic. This video may be available online or you may need to request footage from reporters and editors.
- **Police bodycams.** The officer responding to your crash is unlikely to have captured footage of the actual accident. But their body cameras may record important details in

the aftermath, such as vehicle positions or the other driver's behavior. Any police bodycam footage is the property of the police department.

## How to obtain camera footage of your car accident

Video ownership can affect the process, but in general, here are the steps you need to take to obtain third-party camera footage of your car accident.

1. **Get the facts.** Before requesting video, know the date, time, and location of the crash. Narrowing the request to specific windows of time can make the process go faster.
2. **Identify possible sources of camera footage.** If you're still at the scene, look around and see if any nearby businesses or residences have cameras. If you've left the scene, look up the area online and find business names and addresses.
3. **Find the owners.** Property deeds, business certifications, and government registries can help point you to who has authority over the footage. Your attorney can review these records to track down footage.
4. **Contact the video owner.** This starts with an informal request for the video. They may agree to give you a copy, have questions about how the video will be used, or reject your request. During this step, you may also find out if the source has an application process for video requests.
5. **Protect the video.** To protect video from being systematically or otherwise destroyed, your attorney must send the owner a "spoliation letter." The document reminds the owner of their duty, if they have one, to use reasonable care to preserve the evidence.
6. **File a formal request.** If the informal request didn't work and there is a formal process to request video footage, your attorney can pursue that process. Otherwise, video may be obtained via a subpoena, [public information request](#), or Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) letter for the footage.
7. **If necessary, file an appeal.** If your application requesting footage is officially denied, there may be an appeal process available.
8. **Collect the video evidence.** Whether it's sent by link, email, or hard copy, collect the video as soon as it is available to reduce the risk of damage or loss.

Again, you need to ask as soon as possible – ideally while you're still at the scene of the wreck. The longer you wait, the more likely it is that the footage you need will be destroyed or overwritten.

## How long are camera recordings of a crash available?

When businesses and government agencies use surveillance and traffic cameras, they usually have a policy about how long to keep the video. Some only keep the video for a day or two. Others are required to hold onto the records for longer.

Without swift action by the injured victim or their lawyer, crash videos caught on a personal dashcam, cellphone, or surveillance camera can be deleted at any time. Some people record over old footage or delete videos to make room for new recordings.

A lawyer can take immediate action to preserve and request footage before it is destroyed.

### **To get the right results, you need the right attorney**

Video footage that demonstrates car accident fault or injury severity can give you the upper hand in settlement negotiations and litigation with the insurance company. Winning car accident cases are built on evidence, and video is powerful evidence. That's why you need an attorney who will conduct a thorough investigation and gather all the information needed to build a strong case.

If you were injured or a loved one was killed in a Texas car accident, get an experienced lawyer with a winning track record to handle your claim. Smith & Hassler is a leading car accident law firm serving the Greater Houston Area. We have [recovered millions of dollars](#) in damages for injured accident victims and the families of fatal accident victims.

Our law firm offers [free case evaluation](#) to potential clients. You can use this time to get answers to your crash-related legal questions, an estimate of your claim's value, and help deciding what to do next. There is no obligation to hire us. Just answers. [Contact Smith & Hassler](#) to schedule your free consultation today.