

Determining Fault in Texas Multi-Car Pileups

A car accident lawyer can help prove liability

Whether you're on the Katy Freeway in Houston or another busy Texas highway, a single mistake by just one driver can set off a devastating chain of events that leads to a catastrophic multi-car pileup.

Also known as a chain-reaction accident, a multi-car pileup involves three or more vehicles crashing into each other in quick succession. These [car accidents](#) can occur on highways, freeways, or any other busy roadway with high traffic volume.

In a multi-car pileup, the initial collision can trigger a chain reaction of collisions as motorists attempt to avoid the initial accident and end up crashing into other vehicles. These crashes can be incredibly chaotic and unpredictable, with vehicles careening out of control and smashing into each other in a domino-like effect.

[Multi-car pileups](#) are some of the most frightening and deadly types of accidents on Texas roadways. Often occurring at high speeds, these collisions can cause extensive damage, injuries, and fatalities. As such, determining who is at fault in a multi-car pileup is critical to determining who is liable for the damages and injuries caused by the crash.

What causes pileups?

Chain reaction accidents are often caused by a perfect storm of circumstances that lead to a series of serious crashes. Common causes of multi-car pileups include:

- **Rear-end accidents:** [Rear-end collisions](#) occur when a vehicle hits another vehicle from behind. These collisions often occur in heavy traffic or at stoplights, where drivers may be following too closely (tailgating) or may not give themselves enough time to react to a sudden stop by the vehicle in front of them.
- **Speeding or reckless driving:** Drivers who [exceed the speed limit](#), weave in and out of traffic, or engage in other reckless behaviors are more likely to cause an accident that can lead to a chain-reaction crash since their margin for error is so small.
- **Distracted driving:** Drivers who are [texting](#), talking on the phone, or engaging in other distracting activities may fail to notice other vehicles on the road or fail to react in time to avoid a collision. Texting drivers are not only taking their eyes off the road, but also their hands off the wheel and their minds off the task of driving safely.
- **Impaired driving:** In Texas, [driving under the influence of alcohol](#) or drugs is a serious offense that can lead to accidents of all types, including pileups. Impaired drivers may have reduced reaction times or may make poor decisions on the road, leading to collisions.

- **Rubbernecking:** Rubbernecking occurs when drivers slow down or come to a stop to look at an accident or something else on the side of the road. This can cause traffic to slow or stop abruptly, leading to a chain-reaction collision.
- **Failure to adjust for road conditions:** Poor visibility due to fog or heavy rain can make it difficult for drivers to see other vehicles, increasing the chances of a collision if they don't adjust their driving accordingly. Additionally, wet or icy roads can reduce traction, making it harder for drivers to maintain control of their vehicles, slow down, or stop if needed.
- **Vehicle malfunctions and poor maintenance:** Defective brakes, worn tires, or other mechanical issues can make it difficult for drivers to control their vehicles, especially at highway speeds. In some cases, faulty components or design flaws in the vehicle may cause it to malfunction, leading to a multi-car wreck.
- **Intersection accidents:** Intersections are busy areas where multiple vehicles may be turning or changing lanes. This can increase the risk of accidents, particularly if one or more drivers are not paying attention or are driving recklessly. Drivers who run red lights are a common cause of intersection accidents, which can quickly escalate into pileups if there is heavy traffic.
- **Commercial truck accidents:** Crashes involving semi-trucks, tractor-trailers, and other commercial big rigs can be particularly devastating due to the size and weight of the vehicles involved. Truckers who are fatigued, distracted, or driving under the influence may cause pileups on highways or other busy roadways. Some of the most common [truck accidents](#) that result in chain-reaction crashes include jackknife accidents, truck rollovers, unsecured cargo accidents, and rear-end truck wrecks. A jackknife or rollover can easily block multiple lanes of traffic, leading to an increased potential for pileups.

In short, chain-reaction collisions are often the result of negligence. If you or a loved one was injured in a pileup caused by someone else's careless or reckless behavior, that party may be held financially responsible for any damages or losses you suffered due to the crash.

How is fault determined in a pileup?

Whether it's a three-car accident, a four-car accident, or an even larger pileup, determining fault in a chain-reaction crash can be a complex and contentious process, as multiple factors often contribute. Therefore, determining fault often requires a careful investigation of the accident scene, including witness statements, police reports, and forensic evidence. There may be numerous witnesses to track down and multiple accident reports to review, depending on the number of vehicles involved.

Keep in mind that Texas is a [modified comparative fault](#) state, meaning that compensation for personal injury damages may be reduced by the percentage of fault assigned to the plaintiff as long as that percentage is less than 51%.

If you are less than 51% at fault for an accident, you may still be able to recover compensation, although the amount you receive will be reduced proportionately by your percentage of fault. For example, a driver found to be 25% at fault for an accident may still be able to recover compensation, but their damages will be reduced by 25%.

To illustrate, let's say the driver above had \$100,000 in damages. After their 25% of fault is considered, their final award would be \$75,000. On the other hand, a driver found to be 60% at fault would not be eligible for any compensation.

Navigating the complex legal landscape surrounding personal injury compensation in Texas can be challenging, especially when determining fault and calculating damages. However, with the help of an experienced attorney, individuals who have been injured in an accident can work to protect their rights and secure the compensation they deserve.

How a car accident attorney can help

Multi-car pileups can have severe and long-lasting consequences for those involved. The damages and injuries caused by these accidents can be extensive. Determining who is at fault is the first step in ensuring the responsible party is held accountable for their actions.

An experienced attorney can help you sort through the complex legal and financial issues that arise after a multi-vehicle pileup and aggressively advocate for your best interests throughout the process.

At Smith & Hassler, [our attorneys](#) have extensive experience investigating complex crashes, dealing with insurance companies, and building strong cases that get [results](#). We also offer legal representation on a [contingency fee](#) basis, which means there are no out-of-pocket or up-front costs to worry about, and you pay nothing unless we win your case.

To learn more about how a Houston car accident attorney from our law firm can help you recover the financial compensation you deserve, [contact us today](#) for a free consultation.