

# The Role of Dashcam and Surveillance Video Footage in Proving Texas Car Accident Claims

## Texas car accident lawyer explains how video footage can strengthen your case

When another driver causes a serious [car accident](#), evidence that proves exactly what happened can make or break many car injury claims or lawsuits. Without strong evidence, injury victims might not get the money they deserve for all their accident-related expenses.

One of the most powerful pieces of evidence in such cases is video footage, especially dashcam videos and surveillance footage of the accident. Why is that? What makes video footage of an accident such strong evidence? What other types of video footage are available? And how do you obtain such footage? Our Houston car accident lawyers at [Smith & Hassler, Attorneys at Law](#), explain what to know.

### What types of video evidence can help after a crash?

Every car accident is different, but investigators often rely on several types of video evidence when trying to piece together what happened. Some of the most powerful pieces of video evidence used in support of Texas car accident claims include:

- **Dashcams** – Mounted on a windshield or dashboard, these cameras can record events leading up to and during a crash, capturing speeding, distracted driving, or reckless maneuvers.
- **Business surveillance cameras** – Gas stations, restaurants, warehouses, and retail stores near intersections often have cameras aimed at parking lots or streets that inadvertently record collisions.
- **Residential doorbell cameras** – In neighborhoods, devices like Ring and Nest can show how a crash occurred on residential streets or driveways.
- **Traffic and intersection cameras** – Some Texas municipalities use live monitoring cameras for traffic flow or safety, which may incidentally record crashes.
- **Police body-worn and dash cameras** – These can capture post-collision behavior, statements, or field sobriety testing that reveal fault.

Video evidence can provide an objective record of what happened in seconds leading up to the accident, as well as the accident itself in some cases. That's what makes video evidence such strong evidence. There's no disputing exactly what happened.

### How do dashcams capture proof of driver negligence?

Dashcams record continuously while a vehicle is operating, meaning they can capture moments that drivers or witnesses never notice. In many Texas cases, dashcam footage has revealed key evidence such as:

- Exact time and location of the accident as recorded on video.
- Angle, direction, and position of the vehicles upon impact or immediately afterwards.
- A driver drifting between lanes before impact, showing distraction or fatigue.
- A sudden acceleration through a red light or stop sign.
- Another driver weaving in between cars moments before causing a collision.
- A near-miss moments before the crash, suggesting reckless driving.
- The impact itself, including direction, speed, and reaction time.

Because dashcams can record both audio and video, they may also capture driver statements immediately after the collision. In court, this raw evidence can carry enormous weight—especially when the at-fault driver changes their story later.

### **What role do business and residential cameras play?**

When a crash happens near a business, security footage can be invaluable. Cameras positioned to protect property often record the roadway as well. Houston-area intersections lined with convenience stores or gas stations frequently have systems that show the seconds before, during, and after a crash.

Homeowners in suburban areas – like Katy, The Woodlands, or Sugar Land – often have doorbell cameras that capture video images of a nearby street. These devices may capture vehicles speeding through neighborhoods or failing to yield at stop signs.

The challenge is timing: many video security systems automatically delete old footage within days. Quick legal action is essential to preserve such video evidence. That's where a lawyer can help – by acting fast to obtain such evidence before it's destroyed.

### **Do police or city traffic cameras record car accidents?**

Some Texas cities – and the [Texas Department of Transportation \(TxDOT\)](https://www.txdot.gov/) – operate traffic cameras for congestion management, but not for enforcement. These cameras may help show the flow of traffic, lane closures, or debris patterns after a crash.

These traffic cameras are often owned by city, county, or state agencies. In order to obtain such video footage, a formal request must be submitted to the appropriate government agency through open records laws.

A lawyer familiar with Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) procedures and other government agencies can help identify which agency has the footage and contact them immediately to make sure such evidence is preserved and not overwritten.

### **Does Texas have red light traffic cameras?**

No. The Texas Legislature banned the installation and operation of red-light cameras in 2019 under [Texas House Bill 1631](#). Cities and counties in Texas were required to end contracts for these systems, and new cameras can no longer be installed anywhere in the state.

Before the ban, several Texas cities – including Houston, Dallas, and Austin – used red-light cameras to ticket drivers. While those systems are gone, other sources of video footage can still play a major role in proving who caused a collision at a red light or other locations throughout Texas.

### **How can video footage prove fault in a Texas car accident?**

Video evidence doesn't just show what happened—it helps establish why it happened. Insurance companies, police investigators, and juries can see firsthand if a driver:

- Ignored a stop sign or ran a red light.
- Followed too closely or made an unsafe lane change.
- Was texting, holding a phone, or otherwise distracted at the time of the crash.
- Was speeding or driving aggressively.
- Failed to yield to a pedestrian or another vehicle.

Unlike witness testimony, video footage is objective. It can confirm which driver had the right of way and whether braking or evasive maneuvers occurred before impact. Once insurance companies or juries see this video evidence, it's hard to deny a car accident injury claim.

### **Dashcams: "The cheapest insurance you will ever buy."**

At Smith & Hassler, we've seen firsthand how dashcam video can make all the difference in proving who was at fault. In May 2022, attorney Daragh Carter experienced that truth personally. While driving in Houston with his teenage son, their vehicle was struck by a City of Houston Police Department patrol car that failed to yield and made an unsafe lane change. The impact forced Daragh's vehicle onto a sidewalk, blowing out both driver's-side tires.

Fortunately, Daragh's dashcam recorded the crash from start to finish. The footage left no dispute about who caused the collision and why — a clear example of why our firm

calls dashcams “the cheapest insurance you will ever buy.” Everyone, without exception, should have one.

Attorney Michael Smith Jr. echoed that sentiment, noting how often car accident cases turn into what he calls “swearing matches.” Almost daily, he encounters clients whose cases are unwinnable because each driver insists the other is at fault. This happens frequently in stop-sign collisions, red-light disputes, lane-change wrecks, and double-turn-lane crashes. Without an independent witness or video proof, it can be nearly impossible to establish liability.

In one of Michael’s lawsuits involving a police vehicle, both sides claimed the other ran the red light. The intersection had no cameras, but police dashcams and body-worn cameras can often provide the deciding evidence. Michael requested that footage, knowing it could be the key to proving his client’s case.

These real-world examples highlight why video evidence isn’t just useful and why it’s often the single factor that separates a strong case from one that never gets off the ground.

### **How long does video evidence last before it’s deleted?**

There’s no set time limit for how long different types of videos are saved after a car accident. Some commercial and residential security systems automatically overwrite old recordings within 24 to 72 hours. Others retain videos for only a few days unless they’re downloaded manually.

Dashcams, too, have limited storage and often continuously record over older files. Unless the footage is copied and saved right away, it can be permanently lost. That’s why lawyers send preservation letters, which are formal notices requiring a business or individual to retain footage relevant to a potential legal claim.

### **How can an attorney obtain and preserve video footage?**

Experienced Texas car accident attorneys know that video can disappear faster than many other types of evidence. Smith & Hassler acts quickly to secure such footage by taking the following steps:

- Identifying nearby businesses, homes, or agencies with possible recordings.
- Sending immediate preservation letters and subpoenas when needed.
- Working with crash reconstruction experts to synchronize timestamps and vehicle data.
- Downloading and archiving footage in secure formats for use in negotiations or trials.

Prompt legal action can make sure that crucial video evidence isn't deleted or altered before an injury claim is filed. This is critical since such evidence can often be the deciding factor in many complex car accident claims or lawsuits.

### **What if someone refuses to share video footage of my crash?**

Sometimes, the person or business who has video evidence doesn't want to share it voluntarily. This can happen when the at-fault driver doesn't want to share dashcam video, a nearby store manager is worried about liability, or if a private homeowner is hesitant to get involved. In other cases, a trucking company or insurance carrier might withhold dashcam footage because it clearly shows their driver was at fault.

If that happens, Texas law provides legal tools to compel disclosure. An experienced attorney can:

- **Send a formal preservation letter** – This notice informs the property owner or company that the footage is evidence in a potential claim and must be preserved. Destroying or altering it afterward can lead to spoliation sanctions—serious legal penalties.
- **Issue a subpoena or discovery request** – Once a lawsuit is filed, a lawyer can formally demand the release of the footage through court-approved discovery procedures.
- **Seek a court order** – If the other side still refuses, a judge can compel production and even impose fines or other consequences for noncompliance.
- **Investigate alternative sources** – Even if one source withholds footage, nearby cameras, dashcams, or witnesses may have overlapping views that capture the same event.

Most people cooperate once they understand that the video footage could help establish the truth and that the request comes through proper legal channels. But when they don't, your attorney can use every available option under Texas civil procedure to obtain the video before it disappears.

### **How do accident reconstruction experts use video footage of collisions?**

Video evidence is powerful on its own, but when paired with expert analysis, it can transform a car accident case into a solid legal argument. Accident reconstruction experts specialize in studying the physics, timing, and movement of vehicles to determine exactly how a collision happened – and who was responsible.

They analyze video footage frame by frame, syncing it with other evidence such as police reports, vehicle damage, black box (EDR) data, and skid mark measurements. By doing this, they can calculate:

- **Vehicle speed and braking distance** – Estimating how fast a driver was going and whether they tried to stop before impact.
- **Timing of traffic signals** – Determining whether a light was red or green at the moment of the crash.
- **Sequence of impacts** – Showing which vehicle struck first in multi-car or chain-reaction crashes.
- **Driver reaction time** – Assessing whether the at-fault driver could have avoided the collision with proper attention or control.
- **Visibility and line of sight** – Using lighting, weather, and angles to show whether a driver should have seen a hazard in time.

When presented in court, an accident reconstruction expert's analysis of crash video footage turns abstract claims into clear, visual narratives. A slow-motion re-creation of a distracted driver running a red light or a truck veering into another lane can leave a lasting impression on juries and insurance adjusters alike.

### **What legal issues affect the use of video evidence in Texas?**

While video footage can be a powerful piece of evidence, it's important to make sure that such evidence complies with Texas law and is admissible in court. Key considerations include:

- **Privacy laws** – Texas allows recording of public areas, but footage from private property may require consent.
- **Chain of custody** – Lawyers must prove the video was handled properly and not tampered with.
- **Spoliation** – Destroying or failing to preserve video after receiving notice of a claim can lead to sanctions or adverse findings.
- **Admissibility** – Courts may exclude unclear or irrelevant footage; expert testimony sometimes supports its interpretation.

Experienced attorneys understand these legal complexities. When handled correctly, video evidence can withstand legal challenges and become a cornerstone of a strong car accident injury claim or lawsuit.

### **Get the Houston car accident lawyers who get results**

Video evidence can make or break your case. If you've been hurt in a car or truck accident in Texas, don't wait to find out what happens. Take back control. Talk to a lawyer at [Smith & Hassler, Attorneys at Law](#), and discover what a dedicated Houston car accident attorney can do for you.

We offer a [free case evaluation](#) for all potential clients. That way, you can ask any questions you might have about your accident and how video evidence can strengthen your case. You can also count on us to move fast to preserve video proof, pursue other evidence in support of your case, and demand the compensation you deserve. [Contact us](#) to learn more. We handle injury claims throughout Texas.