

WHAT TO DO AT AN ACCIDENT SCENE

If you are involved in an accident, you need to:

- [Stop.](#)
- [Help anyone who is hurt.](#)
- [Find out what the extent of the damage is.](#)
- [Get all relevant information.](#)
- [Report the accident to the police.](#)
- [Do not interfere with the evidence.](#)
- [Be aware of the legal consequences.](#)

The police will complete an accident report, which is filed either with the SAPS, the local municipality or the provincial Department of Transport and Public Works, depending on whether a criminal case has been opened and whether the accident occurred inside the area of the local authority. All accident reports for accidents outside municipal areas, where there is no criminal case being investigated, are kept with the Department.

Stop!

If you are involved in an accident that causes injury to or the death of anyone, or which causes damage to property or any animal, you are required by law to stop your vehicle.

It is a crime not to stop after an accident, and you could be fined up to R36,000, or sent to prison for up to nine years, or both.

You don't have to stop or report an accident if you crash into a tree and only damage your own car and you yourself are the only one that gets hurt. But, if you damage someone else's property you must stop and then report the incident at the nearest police station.

When you stop, you should switch on your hazard lights to warn other traffic of the accident.

Help anyone who is hurt

After you have stopped, you need to find out if anyone is hurt and help them as much as you can. You also need to call emergency services. The national 24-hour emergency number is 084124 or you can phone the SAPS on 10111.

If you don't know anything about first aid, be careful not to do anything that might make the injury worse.

Unless you yourself need to go for help, you must stay at the scene until a police officer says you can leave. You can be criminally charged for failing to help anyone who is hurt in the accident.

Find out what the extent of the damage is

You will need to find out how much damage has been caused to property.

You need to give your name and address and vehicle registration number to anyone who might need them.

Get all relevant information

If you are involved in the accident, you should try to get the following information from all parties involved and witnesses:

- full names
- ID numbers
- addresses
- telephone details
- vehicle registration numbers.

You should also get:

- descriptions of the vehicles
- details of police and traffic officers and ambulance personnel
- details of tow truck personnel.

This information will help you if you want to make a claim against your insurance or against the Road Accident Fund, or if you want to claim the costs of repairs from the other party.

At a later stage, you or your lawyers may need a copy of the accident report that is filled out by the police.

Report the accident to the police

The police don't have to be called to the scene if no one has been hurt, but the accident must be reported – by both drivers – at a police station or traffic office within 24 hours.

You have to give your name and address and vehicle registration number to the police or traffic officer, either at the scene of the accident or at a police station or traffic office when you report the accident. You must also show your driver's licence.

If you are hurt and can't report the accident immediately, you must do it as soon as possible and explain why there has been a delay in reporting the accident.

It is an offence not to report an accident in which another person's property has been damaged, or in which another person is injured, even if neither of the drivers intends taking legal action.

Do not interfere with the evidence

You must NOT drink any alcohol or take any drugs that have a narcotic effect unless it is on doctor's orders.

If the police ask you to go for a medication examination, you must not drink any alcohol or take any drugs that have a narcotic effect before the examination and before you have reported the accident.

If anyone is injured in the accident, the vehicles may not be moved before the police or traffic officer have arrived and said that the vehicles can be moved.

If the accident totally block the passage of other vehicles, the vehicle may be moved sufficiently to allow vehicles to pass, but only after you have clearly marked the vehicle positions (for example with chalk or spray paint).

Be aware of the possible legal consequences

Some of the possible legal consequences following an accident are:

- a criminal charge of driving without a license
- a criminal charge of drunken driving
- a criminal charge of culpable homicide
- a civil claim for damage to property
- a civil claim for personal injury.