

How Left-Turn Motorcycle Crashes Differ from Car Crashes in Arizona

Don't let the insurance company call the shots. Get a lawyer who rides for you!

Imagine that you're riding your motorcycle through a familiar Arizona intersection with the sun high, traffic light green, and the road clear. Then, out of nowhere, a car turns left directly in front of you. You barely have time to hit the brakes before metal meets metal, and your world flips upside down.

Left-turn crashes are some of the most common and dangerous types of [motorcycle accidents](#) in Arizona. While these crashes can be serious for any driver, there are stark differences between what happens when a car is hit and what happens when a motorcycle is involved.

Why do left-turn crashes happen so often in Arizona?

Arizona's roads aren't just long and wide, they're fast. With many intersections allowing speeds of 45-55 mph, drivers have to make quick decisions when turning left across traffic. Those decisions often go wrong.

Left-turn crashes usually occur because a driver misjudges the speed or distance of oncoming traffic. Sometimes they're trying to beat a yellow light. Sometimes they just don't see the other vehicle. Here are some reasons why:

- Motorcycles are smaller and easier to overlook, especially in busy environments with visual clutter like signs, buildings, and other vehicles. They can easily blend into the background or disappear in blind spots.
- Most drivers are conditioned to look for cars and trucks, not motorcycles. Their brains filter out what they're not expecting, which means even a clearly visible rider can go unnoticed.
- Glare from the sun, high-volume traffic, or distractions like phones, GPS devices, or even kids in the back seat can further compromise a driver's ability to spot an oncoming motorcycle in time.

What makes left-turn motorcycle crashes more dangerous than car crashes?

Cars are built with layers of protection such as steel frames, crumple zones, seatbelts, and airbags. These are all designed to absorb impact and shield occupants. Motorcyclists, on the other hand, ride exposed, with nothing but a helmet and protective gear standing between them and the road.

When a car hits another car during a left turn, the vehicles usually absorb a lot of the impact. Injuries can still be serious, but there's a structural buffer. With motorcycles, the rider becomes the buffer. In a typical left-turn crash involving a motorcycle:

- The rider often gets thrown from the bike.

- The impact tends to be direct and violent.
- There's nothing to absorb the blow but the rider's own body.

The most common injuries from left-turn motorcycle crashes include:

- **Traumatic brain injuries:** Even when the rider is wearing a helmet, head injuries can result in long-term cognitive or neurological impairments.
- **Bone fractures:** Broken legs, arms, and collarbones are frequent due to the force of impact or being thrown from the bike.
- **Back and spine injuries:** Spinal cord injuries may lead to partial or complete paralysis, which could require extensive rehabilitation or lifelong care.
- **Internal injuries:** Internal bleeding and organ damage are especially dangerous because they're not always immediately apparent and can become fatal without prompt medical attention.
- **Road rash:** Severe road rash, caused by sliding across pavement, can strip away layers of skin and often requires painful treatment, including skin grafts and months of wound care.

Even in a slow-speed crash, the rider's body takes the full brunt of the collision. That kind of impact doesn't just lead to hospital visits; it can change someone's life in a matter of seconds.

Why are motorcycles harder to avoid in a left-turn situation?

There's a visual phenomenon at play here called the "size-speed illusion." Basically, our brains perceive smaller objects as being farther away and moving slower than they actually are. This makes motorcycles harder to judge when making a left turn.

Drivers might glance at a rider coming toward them and think they have time to turn. But in reality, that motorcycle is closer and faster than they think. By the time they're in the middle of the intersection, it's too late.

Additionally, motorcycles are often obscured by other vehicles. In multi-lane traffic, a rider may be traveling next to or behind a larger car. A turning driver might see a gap in traffic, not realizing there's a motorcycle right behind it.

Who's usually at fault in these crashes under Arizona law?

In most left-turn crashes, the driver making the turn is at fault. Arizona law (specifically [ARS §28-772](#)) requires drivers to yield to oncoming vehicles when turning left. That includes motorcycles.

If a car turns left in front of you while you're riding your motorcycle and you have the right of way, they're typically going to be found at fault. But that doesn't mean your case is easy.

Insurance companies often have a bias against motorcyclists and may use that bias to shift the blame onto you. For example, they may try to argue that:

- You were speeding.
- You were lane splitting (even though Arizona has legalized it in some cases).
- Your headlight wasn't on, so the driver "couldn't see you."
- You weren't wearing a helmet or bright clothing.

These arguments are designed to push some of the blame onto you, even if the crash clearly wasn't your fault. And under Arizona's pure comparative negligence law, any percentage of fault assigned to you reduces your compensation by that amount.

That's why even clear-cut cases need strong legal backing and evidence such as traffic camera footage, detailed police reports, witness statements, accident reconstruction analysis, and comprehensive medical documentation to clearly establish fault and the full extent of your injuries.

How can motorcyclists reduce the risk of left-turn crashes?

While you can't control what other drivers do, you can take steps to protect yourself. Here are a few tips for staying safe on Arizona roads:

- **Be seen:** Use your headlight, even during the day. Wear reflective gear and high-visibility clothing. Also, add auxiliary lights or reflective tape to your bike.
- **Ride defensively:** Always assume drivers don't see you, especially at intersections. Slow down slightly when approaching a busy intersection, even if you have the right of way. Also, watch for signs that a car is about to turn (tires creeping forward, wheels turned, driver not making eye contact).
- **Take safety courses:** Arizona offers [Motorcycle Safety Foundation](#) courses throughout the state. These teach advanced riding techniques, including how to handle emergency braking and escape maneuvers at intersections.

What kind of compensation can I recover after a left-turn motorcycle crash?

If you're injured in a left-turn crash, you may be entitled to recover damages such as:

- Medical expenses (emergency care, surgery, rehab, prescriptions)
- Future medical costs (long-term treatment or disability care)
- Lost wages and future loss of earning potential
- Pain and suffering
- Property damage (repairs or replacement of your motorcycle)
- Emotional distress or PTSD
- Loss of enjoyment of life, if the crash permanently altered your lifestyle

The exact amount depends on the severity of your injuries, your recovery time, and how clearly fault can be proven. If you lost a loved one in a left-turn motorcycle crash, you can recover

damages through a [wrongful death](#) claim. You must be a surviving spouse, child, parent, legal guardian, or the personal representative of the deceased's estate.

You ride. We fight. Let's get you the compensation you deserve.

If you've been injured in a motorcycle accident anywhere in Arizona, don't let insurance companies dictate the outcome of your case. The legal team at [Browne Law Group](#) knows how quickly a crash can flip your life upside down. We also know how insurance companies treat injured motorcyclists with skepticism, lowball offers, and blame. That's where we come in. We fight for bikers who've been wronged, and we don't back down.

When you work with us, you get a no B.S. legal team that handles the paperwork, the calls, the negotiations, and if needed, the courtroom, so you can focus on healing. We work on a contingency fee basis, which means you don't pay us a dime unless we win your case.

All it takes is one free consultation to find out where you stand. We'll listen to your story, answer your questions, and explain how we can help. You can meet us at our Gilbert office, or we'll come to you, at home or in the hospital. Whatever's easier. [Contact us](#) today and let's start fighting for what you deserve.

"Top notch counsel. On his game and very responsive and on top of that a great guy on a personal level. Highly recommended." – J.D., ★★★★★