

Hit and Run Accidents

Being vigilant following an accident can make all the difference. A hit and run accident means that someone has either been the cause of or has been involved in an accident and leaves the scene before identifying and/or insurance information has been collected. It is either a misdemeanor or a felony depending on the severity of the situation. If you are in any accident, be sure and get as much identifying information about the other driver as you can, as quickly as you can. A license plate number is always a good bet if you have a short window of time and can only get one thing. While most people will do the right thing, it is a good idea to be prepared in case you come across someone who doesn't.

If you are involved in a traffic accident and the other driver leaves the scene, and you haven't already gotten identifying information- here are some recommendations:

- Immediately try to see and remember or record the license plate number and description of the vehicle and the driver. You may only have a few seconds to do this.
- Try to notice where the damage is located on his or her vehicle.
- If you can SAFELY do so, and your vehicle is not disabled, and no one can do it for you, follow the suspect for a short distance to get the license plate number if you were not able to get it at the scene. The suspect will probably be exceeding the speed limit so do not get involved in anything resembling a pursuit. Don't compound the problem by committing traffic violations and causing another accident for which you may be held responsible.
- If you cannot get the information in a short distance, return to the scene and notify the police.
- If other motorists are nearby, try to find a volunteer to follow the suspect to get the license number.
- Ask witnesses to remain or at least to leave their name and address and a written description of the suspect vehicle and driver.

Be Suspicious

While it may be okay to look for the good in people as a general rule of thumb, there are times when it is good to be and stay suspicious. For instance, be suspicious of drivers who do stop following the accident but ask you or offer you money not to call the police. This should immediately alert you that something is wrong. Again, if you haven't already done so, start recording license plate and other information. These drivers may decide to leave quickly. If someone does approach you in this fashion and you're initial "no" isn't acceptable to them, if you can, make sure you have their information and get away from them and call the police! There may be reasons they don't want you to call the police that go well beyond them worrying about things like rising insurance rates. If you cannot get away, do what you can to placate them until you can contact the authorities so they don't get agitated by you telling them something they don't want to hear.