

Car Crush Survival: Do You Know What To Do?

No matter whether you are the driver or passenger in a vehicle, a car accident can be a very traumatic experience.

Even if the accident is minor, you may have hidden injuries, or you may become trapped in the vehicle. Or things could go worse and you might need to get out of the vehicle as quickly as possible.

While every accident is a little bit different, here are just a few basic things you should keep in mind about how to get free from the car and survive the crush.

Subscribe to Survivopedia and get our monthly report for a full version of this article!

Driving Safe is not Enough: How to Reduce the Damage

Knowing what to do prior to an imminent crash can save your life and also mean the difference between minor injuries and ones that leave you in pain or disabled for the rest of your life.

While you may not have much time to act, these simple things can give you the best chance of survival.

Wear Your Seat Belt Properly

Over the years, more than a few people have railed against using seat belts because they feel the government should not tell them how to live their lives. While I am not a big fan of “nanny state” thinking, there is a time when common sense must prevail. As a matter of simplicity, the laws of physics aren’t

going to stop working just because you don't like government interference.

In this case, "a body in motion tends to stay in motion". If you aren't wearing a seat belt at the time of a crash, your body will continue to be propelled in the direction of motion even though the vehicle has stopped.

Use the Steering Wheel to Minimize Damage

You can still use the steering wheel and the crumple zones of the vehicle to minimize damage from the crash as much as possible. Depending on the situation, you may start out with as much as 4 seconds. Count on at least $\frac{3}{4}$ second before you actually see the vehicle move in the direction you turned the wheel.

Keep Both Hands on the Wheel

Insofar as protecting yourself from damage in the crash, there are some techniques you can use. First, always drive with your hands, wrists, and forearms in alignment. A bent or limp wrist can easily be shoved against the steering wheel and broken. In addition, a limp wrist also gives you less support and control in those seconds when you need it most.

Be Careful when Using the Horn

Consider what you do when you are sleeping soundly and someone throws a bucket of water in your face. This is how a distracted driver's mind works. Their primary focus and main involvement revolves around talking on the phone or sending a text.

At best, if you hit the horn, it will take them time to respond as they shift gears away from the phone and back to driving. At worst, a distracted driver may freeze up or do something else unpredictable.

Safety Tips for the Passengers

As a front passenger, properly belted into your seat, the best thing you can do is push your body into the seat and make as much contact as possible. The larger the surface area, the more room there is for the impact force to diffuse.

If seating in the back, try to choose the middle seat. Excluding the increased safety associated with air bags and seat belts in the front of the vehicle, the middle back seat is the safest in the vehicle.

THE DRIVER'S GUIDE TO SAFETY ON THE ROAD

SAFE DRIVING TIPS

DON'T DRINK AND DRIVE

More than 30% of fatalities from car accidents involve intoxicated drivers



WATCH YOUR SPEED

Driving the speed limit is safe, legal, and fuel-efficient



PUT THE PHONE DOWN

Your reaction time slows by as much as 20% when you're using a cell phone



BUCKLE UP

To put it simply, seat belts save lives



KEEP YOUR DISTANCE

Don't follow other cars too closely in case of sudden turns or stops



BE CAUTIOUS

Stay alert, watch for changing road conditions, and be wary of other drivers



MAINTAIN YOUR VEHICLE

Your mechanic can spot any issues that might compromise your safety



IF YOU'RE IN AN ACCIDENT

KEEP YOUR COOL

Check for injuries and keep calm to remain in control



DON'T ADMIT FAULT

Talk business-only to the other driver, and don't admit any wrongdoing



VISIT THE DOCTOR

Even if you feel fine, you may have injuries that are not yet causing symptoms



USE YOUR CELL PHONE

Take pictures of any injuries immediately, as well as of the crash itself



DOCUMENT THE ACCIDENT

Jot down notes about the accident so you don't forget important details



GET A POLICE REPORT

You'll need this when you file your insurance claims



FILE A CLAIM

Contact your insurance company with the details of your accident



SCHEDULE REPAIRS

Bring your vehicle to a trusted mechanic to repair any damage



INFOGRAPHIC PROVIDED BY:
B & L AUTOMOTIVE REPAIRS, INC.
WWW.COLLISIONREPAIRSCHICAGO.COM

SOURCES:
[HTTP://AUTOSHIFTSTUFFWORKS.COM/SAFE-DRIVING-TIPS/ACCIDENTS-HAZARDOUS-CONDITIONS/20-SAFE-DRIVING-TIPS-HTMLPAGE1-2](http://AUTOSHIFTSTUFFWORKS.COM/SAFE-DRIVING-TIPS/ACCIDENTS-HAZARDOUS-CONDITIONS/20-SAFE-DRIVING-TIPS-HTMLPAGE1-2)
[HTTP://WWW.PROGRESSIVEAGENT.COM/ARTICLES/STEPS-TO-TAKE-AFTER-AN-ACCIDENT.aspx](http://WWW.PROGRESSIVEAGENT.COM/ARTICLES/STEPS-TO-TAKE-AFTER-AN-ACCIDENT.aspx)
[HTTP://WWW.DMV.ORG/INSURANCE/FIRST-STEPS-FOLLOWING-A-PERSON-AL-INJURY-AUTO-ACCIDENT.PHP](http://WWW.DMV.ORG/INSURANCE/FIRST-STEPS-FOLLOWING-A-PERSON-AL-INJURY-AUTO-ACCIDENT.PHP)

One Second After: Status Check

If you have ever been in an accident, there is no mistaking how those first seconds of awareness will feel. No matter whether you lose consciousness, are slightly dazed, or are simply startled by the “bump” or “tap” that got your attention, the reality that you were in an accident can take time to settle in.

You have to realize that what you thought was a slight tap could have turned your vehicle upside down, or sent it crashing into a guardrail or worse. In these first few seconds to minutes, it is very important to stay as still as possible.

Before you move, try to take note of the following:

- The actual position of your body. Are you crumpled up, arms at odd angles, or is your head drooped over onto your chest?
- What do you see? Are you looking out the windshield, a side window, or is everything dark inside the vehicle?
- What do you smell? Is there a smell of gas in the air, dust, or something burning?
- What do you hear? Are there sounds of sirens, voices, or other sounds that might indicate someone is trying to get you out of the vehicle?

During those first few seconds, it is entirely possible you will not feel any pain. Do not be fooled by this. As your senses return and you become aware of the situation, you may feel a great deal of pain, along with coughing, dizziness, nausea, too hot, too cold, or even shaky. It can take seconds to minutes for this to subside.

If you move around too much or start thrashing around trying to escape, you can make wounds worse, or cause broken bones to scrape against each other. The key to this time is to stay still and make each movement count.

While you may be tempted to see if you can open the vehicle door, or try some other escape maneuver, the first thing you must do is make sure you are calm and composed. Take some deep breaths if you are able, and give yourself a chance to adjust to the shock of your situation.

Even if you smell gasoline or something burning, you must not panic. Get control of yourself and you will escape faster and with less effort than if you are in a panic.

Getting Out of the Crushed Car

There is no such thing as a car accident that won't cause you to feel upset and distressed. In some cases, it will be absolutely necessary to try and escape from the vehicle if you want to remain alive. Having the proper tools on hand is every bit as important as knowing what to do.

But most of all, what you need to survive is trigger words and the right mindset. When you have only minutes to escape, it is best to know how to achieve calm in a matter of seconds. A few sessions of self hypnosis and the choice of an activating keyword or image can give you this calm in any situation. Gain this tool and practice it often so that you have confidence in your ability to control yourself and think clearly.

After you have secured relatively dust free air, regained composure, called for help, and assessed your situation, and medical condition, it is time to see about getting out of the vehicle. Here are the basic steps to follow:

- If you have cuts or gashes, try to bind them up with plastic ties and cloth. Even a plastic bag will do if you have nothing else to stop the bleeding and prevent the wounds from picking up dust and dirt as you move.
- Cut yourself free of the seat belt if you cannot reach the release button or it does not work. Don't forget to brace yourself if you are upside down or in a position

where you are going to fall once the belt is no longer holding you in place.

- See if you can open the vehicle door nearest to you. If you cannot and there is a risk of fire or sinking, then break the window nearest you in order to get out of the vehicle. In situations where there is less immediate risk, you can see if another door will open. When breaking a car window, it will produce very sharp glass shards. It is best to avoid having to break the window and try to crawl through all those bits of glass unless you have no other choice.

More than a few sources recommend gathering up your personal belongings before trying to exit the vehicle. While this may be somewhat appropriate advice if the crash is minor, I feel it can cost your life if there is a high risk of the vehicle catching fire or sinking.

If danger is that imminent, you will be best served by focusing on getting out of the seat belt and then out of the vehicle window if necessary. Remember, nothing is as important as your life, and that objects can all be replaced later on. Unless there is another person in the vehicle that also needs to escape, focus on your own well being.

*This article has been written by **Carmela Tyrell** for Survivopedia.*