



FLORIDA BUS ACCIDENT GUIDE

*What To Do If You're
Seriously Injured In A Bus Accident*



If you have been involved in a bus accident, it might have taken a huge toll on your mental, physical, and emotional wellbeing. You may also be feeling financially burdened by these unexpected medical bills that you might be having trouble paying if you're being forced to miss time at work. Our Tampa Bay bus accident attorney is

here to help you through this legal obstacle course to win you the compensation you need and deserve. Please call our office today for a free consultation.

NECESSARY FIRST STEPS

The first step after an accident is to get medical attention. You may be in a lot of pain in the moments after the accident and it is important for you to get in front of a doctor as soon as possible. You do not want to wait to see a doctor as there is a possibility that your condition will get worse if you don't get treatment when you need it. You don't want to brush off the pain you may be in, thinking it will go away, for two reasons. As mentioned, you could get worse. Also, if you don't get the treatment you should be getting, the insurance company will be more than happy to say you don't need compensation for injuries that they won't believe exist.

The next important step after your accident that you really should not leave the scene before doing, especially if you're a passenger on the bus, is to tell authorities or the bus company that you were involved in the accident so that they have record of you being there. If you are able to stay, you should take photos and videos and talk to witnesses so that you can start compiling your evidence. You can use all of this evidence to protect your right to compensation.

Last big step is to hire an attorney who you trust to start working on your case right away. There are several extremely important roles a Tampa Bay bus accident attorney will play in your case. They will help put your evidence to good use, make sure you stay on track to get everything done in time, and protect you from the insurance company so that you get the most compensation possible.

DEALING WITH OBSTACLES

The biggest and most worrisome obstacle that you should be aware of is the insurance company and their role in all of this. Their biggest goal is not to help you out, but to either throw out your claim or reduce the amount of compensation that they will have to give you. They do this by trying to get you to ruin your own case. They will call you soon after the accident and start asking for you for a recorded statement. If you want full and fair compensation, the best thing to do is tell them to contact your attorney for information. You should never give them a statement so that you don't have to worry about them twisting your words. Don't give them any reasons to ruin your case. When they call you, you can confirm you were involved in the accident, but past that, they can be referred to your attorney.



INJURIES YOU MAY HAVE

A bus accident does not always mean the bus crashed and you got hurt. Sometimes you get hurt in an accident that is unrelated to a crash. You might have been hurt getting on or off the bus or you might have slipped at the bus stop. With a crash, you may be the driver of a vehicle that was involved in the accident with the bus, or a passenger on the bus during the accident. All of those circumstances would warrant a bus accident claim if you were injured. The types of injuries you may have had include:

- » Broken bones or fractures
- » Dislocation
- » Bruising or cuts
- » Whiplash
- » Concussion or brain injury

- » Spinal cord injury
- » Scarring or disfigurement

Again, regardless if you were injured in a slip and fall at the bus stop, as a passenger on the bus during the crash, or as a driver of a vehicle that collided with the bus, you are eligible to file a bus accident claim. As mentioned, you need to get your injuries checked out as soon as possible because you might worsen your condition if you wait to see a doctor. You need to make your health a priority.



FREQUENTLY ASKED BUS ACCIDENT QUESTIONS

How Do I Pick the Right Attorney?

I've been asked, "What do you look for to hire the best attorney to help you with your bus accident case?" This is, perhaps, the most important decision that you can make along the way. Find an attorney who is willing to take your case to trial, and who has the experience litigating these cases all the way to trial. Insurance companies know which attorneys will settle the case before going to trial and which of them are willing to take it all the way to a jury verdict.

That's because they know which attorneys are willing to go the distance and they actually may give you a better settlement result without even having to go to trial, because they know the attorney is willing to go the distance. Don't hire a general practitioner. Don't assume just because you see this person's name on a billboard all over town throughout Florida that they're the best person. Having advertising dollars does not mean the best outcome for you.

What Do I Need to Do to File a Claim?

You may be asking yourself, "What are the steps that we need to take to file a bus accident claim?" We've got to do our investigation like we would do any

investigation. You need to get your medical care and treatment which is first and foremost and you need to make sure that you're following all the steps of your doctors.

We need to be going out there and getting photographs of the vehicles, preserving evidence of the scene of the accident, and conferring with the entity that owns the bus company to make sure that if there's any video on the bus that's being preserved. If there is a vehicle black box, or event data recorder, we need to make sure that our letters go out to that company to make sure that electronic information is being preserved.

Those are all the steps that we're going to take initially. Once we understand the dynamics of what happened, and we understand who failed to use reasonable care under the circumstances in causing that accident to occur, then from there we're going to be putting your medical information together in a comprehensive demand to the at-fault party and their insurance company to ensure that you indeed receive your full and fair compensation.

What Mistakes Do I Need to Avoid Making?

One of the biggest mistakes clients make is that they don't let anybody know that they've been injured. That's probably the first thing that happens.

You need to tell the bus driver, EMT, or law enforcement that you've been injured in a bus accident. Tell the person around you. Take photographs with your cell phone if you can.

The next mistake would be turning away the ambulance. You should go to the hospital and make sure you get checked out. Even if you feel okay, you may not be okay.

The most serious mistake a person can make in a bus accident claim is they don't hire the right attorney. It's important that you hire an attorney who has experience and who's willing to take the case from the very beginning all the way to a jury verdict. Don't delay hiring that attorney because evidence begins to evaporate and witnesses memories begin to fade. Evidence by its very nature tends to dry up. It's important that you hire an attorney at the very beginning, at the earliest opportunity.

What If a Bus Hits My Car?

You may be wanting to ask, “What if I’m injured in a car accident where a bus strikes my vehicle?” In Florida, that is a very special and unique situation because if you’re injured in an accident where you’re struck by a bus either as a pedestrian or as an occupant of another motor vehicle, we have to put that entity on notice within a very specific time period. That’s what we call the Florida Sovereign Immunity Law which requires us to give them a notice of claim within three years from the date that accident occurred.

That situation involves a bus accident where the bus is owned by either a municipality or a county or some other entity. There’s also the instance where you might be injured by a bus from a school. That relates to the school board that bus driver was working for. Whether it’s the school board of Pinellas County, or the school board of Pasco County, or Hillsboro county, the same rule applies because the rules of Sovereign Immunity will apply to that claim. We have to put that entity on notice within that three-year time period.

Otherwise, your own insurance will apply as well, specifically your no-fault coverage. Your personal injury protection coverage which covers you up to 80% of your reasonable medical expenses up to \$10,000, and 60% of any of your lost income or lost wages up to that same \$10,000. If you’re injured in a bus accident, please give us a call. We’re here to help you and make sure that your rights are protected and you receive full compensation for your injuries.

What is the Difference Between a Bus and Car Accident Claim?

You may be wondering about the differences between a bus accident claim and a claim involving just another motor vehicle. There are similarities and there are differences. In either case, it’s important that you contact an attorney as soon as possible to prosecute the claim.

The differences with the bus accident are that you want to make known to everyone around you that you’ve been injured. Sometimes a person can be injured in a bus accident, and for whatever reason, there’s no record at all that they were even on the bus. Make it known to those around you including the driver, law

enforcement who comes to investigate the scene, and the EMT who's there to help. Let them know who you are so that there's actual documentation that you've been involved in the accident and that you've been injured.

The next important thing is to make sure that you get medical treatment. Don't turn away the ambulance because it could manifest later as a really bad injury.

What Should I Know About the Insurance Investigation?

You may be wondering whether it is okay, after a bus accident, to talk to the insurance company or the attorney who was representing the entity that operated the bus. The answer is, without exception, absolutely not. You do not want to talk to an insurance company or the attorney for the other side. They are not your friend. They have one goal, and that is to settle the claim as quickly as possible for the least amount of money.



The best thing that you can do is get medical attention. Number two, make sure that everybody that you come in contact with knows that you were involved in that bus accident; not just the law enforcement, but the EMT, and the bus driver. Number three, do not delay getting an experienced trial advocate who can help you prosecute that claim.

Should I Take a Settlement Offer?

You may be worried about if you should take the first offer that's been presented to you after you have submitted a demand. To address this concern, we need to know what the full and fair value of your case is. In general, we work with the opposing side to try to resolve your case without having to file a lawsuit. It's not because we don't want to file a lawsuit or represent you in a courtroom. We love representing our clients in a courtroom but we also know that the practicality of the case is such that it's going to serve your interest to try to resolve that case fully and fairly without filing a lawsuit if we can get that done.

If we're presented with an offer after we've presented that demand, and if that offer represents the true value of the case, then we may indeed recommend that we accept it. If it doesn't, then we're going to enter into negotiations to do everything so that you receive full and fair compensation.

How Long Will This Case Take?

You may be hoping to ask, "How long is this whole process going to take for me to get this claim resolved?" The short answer is it is entirely up to you, but if you want to get the best possible results, then we're going to take as long as we need to.

You've been injured in a bus accident and you are just now starting to appreciate what's happened to you. What you think has happened to you today may be completely different from what you realize has happened to you six months from now or a year from now. The doctors are not going to know until they've had an opportunity to fully examine you, to treat you, to see how you respond to that treatment, and to see what your future medical needs may be.

Those are the critical parts of your claim that we're going to take our time with to make sure that are fully understood before we determine the value of the claim. Determining the value cannot be figured out today. It's going to take time for your medical case to develop. Over time, once it develops and we have relatively good confidence that we understand the full extent of your injuries and how they'll affect you the rest of your life, only then will we be in a position to resolve your claim or be in the process to resolve your claim.

What If My Kid is Hurt on a School Bus?

A frequently asked question is whether or not a school can be held responsible if a child is injured on a school bus. The answer is yes. Florida law does allow for people to sue the school or the school district if the driver has been negligent or the school did something that they were not supposed to do that resulted in injury to a child on a school bus.

There are limitations because you're suing a subdivision of the state of Florida. In order to make the best of that, the lawyer has to know what they're doing. They have to have experience prosecuting claims that are despite the limited

waiver of sovereign immunity that you have in the state of Florida, but certainly, there is no deterrent for our firm to take on cases where a child has been injured on a school bus.

What Are My Rights to Compensation?

You may be wondering how to protect your rights to compensation after being injured as a passenger on a bus. First and foremost, it's very important that you tell the investigating police officers and the driver of that bus who you are so that they know that you were indeed injured on that bus. Many times, people will just leave the bus which is a huge mistake.

They may think maybe they're not hurt. They don't give their information to the police or bus company and let them know that there are definite injuries that are involved. Please make sure that information is transmitted so that your identity is there.

Then, of course, it's very important in this process that you contact your own insurance company right away so that they're aware of that. Your own insurance may apply in that instance. Then let us help you through that process, because we want to make sure that the bus company is put on notice of your injury right away.

Many times, in a bus accident case, if you're a passenger, there's video on that bus. We want to make sure that video is preserved as well. We want to get our letter of representation out as soon as possible to the company to make sure that video is preserved, because many times it will show the actual mechanism of injury that you sustained during that accident which can be a critical piece of evidence in the case.

How Much is My Case Worth?

When you are injured in a bus accident, you may be wondering how we determine the value of your claim. We're going to prosecute your claim to the fullest extent of the law and that the value would depend on what your losses were and what they will be. That would include past medical expenses, future medical expenses, past lost wages, future lost wages, and of course, any pain and

suffering from the time of the accident that you may have to endure the rest of your life.

That's how we assess the value. It's different for every client of ours. Each case is unique. They have different expectations for the happiness that they want to achieve in their lives, and to the extent that an injury affects it even a little bit of it, it can affect the value of a claim. That's how we determine the value. It's all about getting a full understanding of our client in every way in which that accident and that injury has affected them.

CALL US TODAY FOR A FREE CONSULTATION

These accidents can cause you a lot of hardship and you shouldn't have to pay the consequences for an accident you wouldn't have been in if it weren't for the carelessness of someone else. At Perenich The Law Firm, we want to help you to get the compensation you deserve. We won't allow the insurance company to bully you out of your claim. We will protect you and give you the dedicated support that you will need to get through this case successfully. Please call us today for a free consultation.



CREATED BY PERENICH THE LAW FIRM

Brothers and founding partners of PERENICH The Law Firm, Greg, Tim, and Terence maintain their mission to continue the legacy their father, Guy Perenich, began decades before. Together, the

brothers reaffirm their connection to the community they've always called home, through the vocation of legal advocacy, in service to righting the wrongs of injustice.

PERENICH The Law Firm was built upon a foundation of values and principles Guy Perenich taught his sons. Today Greg, Tim and Terence carry on their father's legacy to bring justice to all members of our Tampa Bay community.

We are a family of trial lawyers at PERENICH The Law Firm with deep ties to Clearwater and communities throughout Tampa Bay. For decades, we have built strong bonds and formed lasting relationships with our clients, continuing a multi-generational commitment to helping those seeking recovery and justice.

Our family is dedicated to protecting your family, just as we would our own. Whether an experienced personal injury attorney is needed to enforce your rights after an auto accident, or you need expert legal representation to protect your home in foreclosure or bankruptcy, the attorneys of PERENICH The Law Firm are committed, experienced, effective, reliable Tampa Bay area bankruptcy and accident injury lawyers.

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