

First on Scene

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What to Do Until the Ambulance Arrives

Have you ever come upon an accident before emergency medical service (EMS) personnel arrive and were unsure how to assist? It can be a daunting situation. It's tempting to just ride past, but think how you would feel if you were the injured victim who desperately needed help!

The essential things to remember at any injury crash scene are: Call for EMS help immediately; don't put yourself in a situation where you could become a victim; and do no further harm.

Stop in a safe place, activate your bike's flashers (if equipped), and use your motorcycle to light the scene if it is night. Think: Is it safe for me? Is it safe for the victim? People tend to get tunnel vision

and focus on the victim. Before you plunge into an accident scene, however, take a quick look around to get the big picture. Does it look staged? In rare cases criminals have set up fake accidents or breakdowns to draw in their prey. Perhaps the victim was shot off the motorcycle and the shooter is still nearby. Was it a hit-and-run and the perpetrator is just now leaving? Write down license-plate numbers – in the roadside sand if necessary. Get a full description of any vehicles and people, and call authorities as soon as possible. Preserve any evidence.

As soon as you determine there are injured victims, or that police are needed for any reason, call 911 or another local emergency number. The dispatcher will want to know the exact location and if



As soon as you determine what help is needed from the police, fire department or ambulance, call the local emergency number, which is usually 911.



If the victim is unresponsive, check for breathing and feel for a pulse at a carotid artery, located on both sides of the neck. (Try this on yourself now to learn the locations.)

possible the number of victims and severity of injuries. This allows them to send the right resources, such as a paramedic ambulance or helicopter.

If any people or debris are in or close to the road, you need to consider traffic control. If other people are on the scene, ask them to help with this. Never move injured people unless they are in extreme peril, such as next to or under a burning vehicle that you can't extinguish or move, or in imminent danger of being run over by oncoming vehicles if it is impossible to stop or redirect traffic in time.

Many states have Good Samaritan laws that protect unpaid people who help at an accident scene, providing they were not grossly negligent. If a person is unconscious and needs assistance, implied-consent statutes allow bystanders to render life-saving aid. Check if your state has such laws. Assume that any victims have communicable diseases, and avoid coming in contact with bodily fluids. Keep your motorcycle gloves on if you don't have rubber gloves in your first-aid kit.

Do a quick triage to determine how many victims there are and who is most urgent. If a victim is conscious you must get permission to assist them. The person with the highest level of medical training should be in charge. Say something like, "Hi, my name is Ken. What's yours? It looks like you need help. Can I assist you? What happened? Do you know where you are? Do you feel pain? Where?" A person's level of consciousness tells a lot about their condition. It's a good sign if they are alert and fully oriented.

For Unconscious Victims Remember ABC

A – Airway: Determine if there is anything blocking the airway or in the mouth or throat that needs to be cleared immediately. Avoid

removing a helmet unless the person will die if it isn't done before the ambulance arrives.

B – Breathing: Is the person breathing? Determine by listening, watching the chest, etc.

C – Circulation: Check the pulse at the carotid artery, right next to the windpipe/Adam's apple on either side. If the person is breathing they will have a pulse. If pulse or breathing is not present, begin rescue breathing or CPR, if you know how.

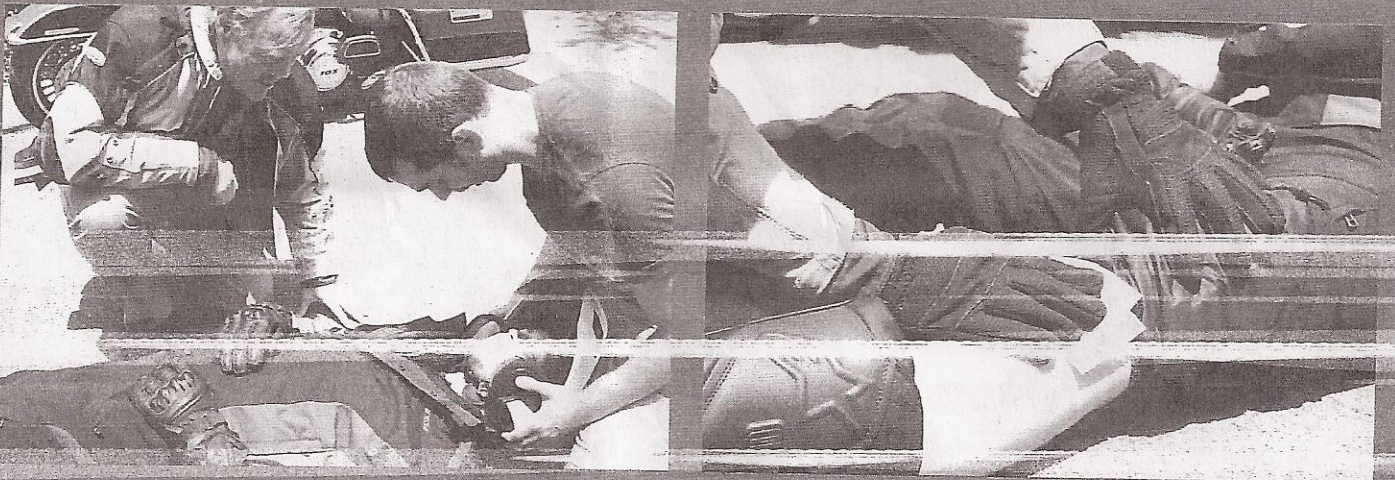
Assume that any crash victim has a head, neck or spinal injury, which could paralyze them if they are moved. Keep victims' heads immobile, even if they say they can move their head normally. Tell them, "You've been in an accident and it's important that you don't move. We don't know if you have a spinal injury or not. An ambulance is coming."

Control heavy bleeding by applying steady, direct pressure with sterile gauze pads. Use a clean cloth or T-shirt as a last resort if no sterile dressing is available. **RR**

Ken Freund is a former member of a Sheriff's Rescue Team and EMT.

Disclaimer

This information is intended to be educational on what to do if you encounter an accident and is not an authoritative source of medical advice. You should take such further steps as taking a certified ASMI, CPR or Red Cross First Aid class and talking to your doctor. Responsibility resides with individuals to educate themselves as much as possible. These are only suggestions. Every situation may warrant different responses, and the author and publisher will not be held responsible for injury that may occur as a result of following the steps provided.



Here, one person talks to and assures the victim while an assistant immobilizes the head and neck to protect against further injury.

Direct pressure with a sterile gauze pad is used to stop bleeding from a wound.