

# **The Dangers of Dooring Accidents and the Legal Rights of Cyclists**

## **New Orleans bicycle accident lawyer fighting for maximum compensation**

Imagine riding your bike through the Bywater in New Orleans. The sun's shining, you've got a good rhythm going, and then a car door suddenly swings open into your path. There's no time to swerve. You hit it hard and go flying. You land on your back, dazed, bruised, and maybe even broken. It wasn't speeding traffic or a distracted driver behind the wheel. It was a door.

They call it a [dooring accident](#), and if you ride a bike in Louisiana, it's a risk you face every single day. This isn't about paranoia; it's about awareness. Because once you understand how and why these accidents happen, and what the law says you can do about them, you'll be better equipped to stay safe and take action if the worst occurs.

### **What exactly is a dooring accident?**

A dooring accident happens when someone opens the door of a parked car directly into the path of an oncoming cyclist. The cyclist either crashes into the door or swerves to avoid it. Sometimes the cyclist ends up colliding with a passing car or falling hard onto the pavement.

Many people have never seen a dooring accident. But it's more common than you might think, especially in New Orleans where cyclists ride through narrow lanes and tight traffic.

### **What types of injuries are caused by dooring accidents?**

Dooring accidents can cause a variety of serious injuries, often because the rider has little time to react and no protection from impact. Common dooring accident injuries include:

- Head injuries and concussions, especially if the cyclist isn't wearing a helmet or is thrown into traffic.
- Broken bones, particularly in the hands, arms, shoulders, or collarbone from trying to brace for the fall.
- Facial injuries, such as cuts, dental damage, or eye trauma from hitting the door or pavement.
- Spinal injuries, including herniated discs or nerve damage from a hard landing.
- Soft tissue injuries, like bruises, sprains, or torn ligaments.
- Road rash, which can lead to infection or scarring if the cyclist skids across the pavement.
- Internal injuries, including internal bleeding or organ damage if the force of impact is severe.

### **Why are Louisiana cities especially dangerous for dooring?**

Most Louisiana cities weren't built with cyclists in mind. The roads are narrow. The bike lanes are often wedged between moving traffic and rows of parked cars. That's what is known as the "door zone." It's a narrow strip of pavement just wide enough for a bike and just dangerous enough to turn any ride into an ambulance call.

The danger worsens when rideshare drivers stop suddenly, tourists hop out without looking, and distracted locals fumble with their coffee and phone.

In New Orleans especially, the situation gets worse during festival season or heavy tourist months. The French Quarter, Magazine Street, and even parts of Mid-City are crawling with parked cars and people who are more focused on something other than the approaching bike they're about to door.

### **What does Louisiana law say about dooring?**

Under [Louisiana Revised Statute § 32:283](#), it's illegal to open the door of a motor vehicle unless it's reasonably safe to do so and without interfering with traffic. Bicycles count as traffic.

That means drivers and passengers have a legal duty to check for approaching cyclists before they swing that door open. If they don't, and someone gets hurt, they can be held responsible, both in traffic court and in civil court.

The good news is that the law is on your side. But knowing that won't help much if you're lying in the street with a busted collarbone and a totaled bike.

### **Who's at fault in a dooring accident?**

In most dooring accidents, fault lies with the person who opened the door. That could be the driver, the front passenger, or even a backseat rideshare passenger. If they failed to check their surroundings before opening the door into traffic, they're the one who created the hazard.

But Louisiana uses a pure comparative fault system. That means your compensation in a legal claim can be reduced by the percentage of fault you share.

So if the driver is found 80% at fault for opening the door, but insurance companies argue that you were 20% at fault because you were riding too fast or too close to the cars, your recovery would be reduced by that 20%.

This is why evidence matters so much in dooring claims, so you don't bear fault. This includes photos of the scene, witness accounts, police reports, and helmet cam footage. The more you can show, the stronger your case will be if you decide to pursue compensation.

### **What are cyclists legally allowed to do to avoid dooring?**

You might be surprised to learn this, but Louisiana law gives cyclists the right to take the lane when it's unsafe to ride to the far right. Riding in the door zone is, by definition, unsafe. You're

not obligated to hug the curb if it puts you in danger. You can ride a few feet out from parked cars to avoid getting doored, even if that means slowing down traffic behind you.

Other legal precautions include:

- Using lights at night (white in front, red in back)
- Wearing reflective gear
- Using hand signals when changing lanes or turning
- Riding predictably and avoiding sudden swerves

You're not required by law to wear a helmet in Louisiana (unless you're under 12), but your skull is worth protecting. Helmets don't make you invincible, but they sure can make the difference between a bad day and a life-altering one.

### **What kind of compensation can cyclists recover after a dooring incident?**

If you were injured because someone opened a car door into your path, you can file a personal injury claim to recover damages. These typically fall into two categories:

#### **Economic damages (actual costs):**

- Emergency care and hospital bills
- Surgery, medication, and rehabilitation
- Bike repairs or replacement
- Lost wages or reduced ability to work

#### **Non-economic damages (harder to quantify but very real):**

- Pain and suffering
- Emotional distress or anxiety
- Scarring or disfigurement
- Loss of enjoyment of life

### **How can drivers and passengers help prevent dooring accidents?**

The easiest way to avoid causing a dooring accident is to use the Dutch Reach. Instead of opening the car door with your left hand (if you're the driver), use your right. This forces your body to rotate, which makes it far more likely drivers will spot an approaching cyclist.

Passengers can do the same. Those getting out of a rideshare can double check their surroundings, especially in areas with visible bike lanes. New Orleans could also do their part by offering more buffered bike lanes, public awareness campaigns, signage, and better infrastructure.

**Doored while riding your bike? Let a trusted New Orleans attorney fight for your recovery.**

A dooring accident can happen in a second, but the injuries can last far longer. If someone flung open their car door into your path and sent you crashing to the pavement, the [Law Offices of John S. Williams](#) is here to help. We'll investigate your crash, gather the evidence, and hold the negligent party accountable, because your safety and your future matter.

Our law firm serves injured cyclists throughout the city and surrounding parishes, and we offer trusted legal guidance every step of the way. When you work with us, you won't pay a dime unless we win your case. That's because we work on a contingency fee basis, so you focus on healing while we fight for your compensation. It all starts with a free, no-pressure consultation where we'll listen to your story and explain your rights.

If you've been injured in a dooring accident, don't let the insurance company downplay your pain or reduce your compensation. [Contact us online](#) or call today to schedule your free case consultation. We'll stand up for you, just like we've done for so many others in New Orleans.

*"The office is very clean and professional. The legal secretary is wonderful. You will be greeted by her. The attorneys are very kind and good at what they do."* –N.L., ★★★★★