



AUSTRALIAN RESUSCITATION COUNCIL

GUIDELINE 8.6

PRIORITIES AT THE SCENE OF A ROAD ACCIDENT

At the scene of a road accident, a person may survive the initial impact but, if unconscious, can die from airway obstruction by foreign material or tongue, or even bleed to death. Action taken by the first person on the scene may prevent avoidable brain damage or loss of life. There are some simple steps to follow.

AT THE SCENE OF A ROAD ACCIDENT

1. Before approaching, assess if there is any danger in the environment.
2. Make the accident scene as safe as possible for the victim, rescuer, and bystanders.
3. **All victims lying on a road/railway line etc must be moved to safety.** If unconscious, the victim should be turned onto the side to give a clear airway, while maintaining spinal alignment. (See Guideline 2.3)
4. Check to see if people are injured.
5. Send for help.
6. Stay with and assist the injured victim(s).

MAKE THE ACCIDENT SCENE AS SAFE AS POSSIBLE

To make the area as safe as possible, the rescuer should:

- turn off the ignition of a crashed vehicle
- warn approaching vehicles e.g. use hazard lights
- not touch a vehicle, or attempt to rescue a person from within six metres of a fallen high voltage power line unless the electricity authority has declared the area safe
- warn the victim(s) and bystanders not to smoke.

IDENTIFY AND ASSIST THE INJURED

The rescuer should:

- identify the number of people injured and ensure that an ambulance has been called

- treat any unconscious victim first by caring for:
 - Airway
 - Breathing
 - Compressions

Attend to the unconscious victim first

The rescuer should:

- turn the unconscious victim on the side and clear the airway
- if resuscitation is needed, assess and manage the victim following the Australian Resuscitation Council Basic Life Support Flow Chart - Guideline 7
- stop any bleeding promptly in accordance with Guideline 8.1.

Attend to the conscious victim

The rescuer should:

- stop any bleeding promptly using improvised materials if necessary
- immobilise any obvious fractures
- allow a victim to assume the position of greatest comfort
- talk reassuringly to any victims
- constantly re-check airway, breathing, and circulation for any deterioration in the victim's condition.

HOW TO ASSIST THE VICTIM IN A VEHICLE

Ideally, all victims should be removed from the vehicle. Occasionally, under harsh environmental conditions (rain, cold, heat,) a conscious victim may be left in the vehicle.

If the person is unconscious and trapped in the vehicle, the victim's airway must be cleared of foreign material and the rescuer or a bystander should maintain head tilt and jaw support.

Expired air resuscitation can be performed with a victim sitting in a vehicle, provided that the rescuer can gain access from one side. If the pulse is absent, the victim must be removed from the car onto a firm surface if external cardiac compression is to be performed effectively.

The Conscious Victim

Assist the victim from the vehicle, supporting any painful limbs and place the victim on the side or in a position of comfort. Very painful injuries of the lower limbs may occasionally prevent a rescuer from assisting a conscious victim from a vehicle. In this situation the victim should be reassured and continually observed until an ambulance arrives. If the victim complains of spinal pain or is paralysed, extreme care should be taken assisting the person from the vehicle maintaining spinal alignment (see P.S. 8.18).

The Unconscious Victim

An unconscious person should be gently removed from the vehicle maintaining spinal alignment and placed on the side. A clear airway must be maintained at all times.

A Trapped Victim

A conscious person, if possible, should lie on the side within the vehicle and be reassured. The rescuer should continually assess the airway, breathing and circulation.

Moving an injured person (See Guideline 2.3)

SEND FOR HELP PROMPTLY

The rescuer should ask a bystander to call the ambulance on “000” and indicate the:

- location as accurately as possible. Use landmarks if appropriate
- type of accident
- number of injured people
- need for fire brigade, electricity authorities or other special assistance.

FURTHER READING

ARC Guideline 2.1 Priorities in an Emergency
ARC Guideline 2.2 General Principles of Management of the Collapsed Person
ARC Guideline 2.3 Moving an Injured Victim
ARC Guideline 7 Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation
ARC Guideline 8.1 Control of Bleeding
ARC Guideline 8.3 Electric Shock
ARC Guideline 8.4 Shock
ARC Guideline 8.18 Management of Suspected Spinal Injury