

Gorski Consulting Website

Archived News - 2013 - April

April 28, 2013

Irony of Selective Road Safety Enforcement

We have uploaded a new article to the Articles page of this website entitled "Irony of Selective Road Selected Road Safety Enforcement" in order to address the continual issue that we present on this website of the inadequate attention that is being paid to roadway defects and maintenance issues. The present article high-lights some additional road safety problems that we have uncovered and we discuss the lack of attention being paid to these problems.

April 25, 2013

Tractor-Trailer Rollover on Hwy 401 westbound entrance ramp from Highbury Avenue

A tractor-trailer that was attempting to enter Highway 401 on the westbound entrance ramp from Highbury Ave rolled over at approximately 1630 hours this evening. Views of the scene shortly after its occurrence are shown below.







Roof Off Trailer Strikes Driver of Commercial Van Resulting In Fatal Injuries on Elgin Road Near Harrietsville, Ontario



White van still resting in west field off Elgin Road at approximately 1900 hours on April 25, 2013.

Elgin Road still remained closed as of 1900 hours of April 25, 2013 following an unusual event that resulted in fatal injuries to the driver of a white commercial van after it was reportedly struck by the roof of a trailer that had blown off and impacted into the driver's windshield area of the van.



View of commercial van at the right edge of the view, resting in the west field of Elgin Road near Harrietsville, Ontario.

April 24, 2013

Another Drowned Driver at Roadside Creek in Wallaceburg, Ontario

66-year-old Alan Knowles represents another victim of a recent rash of drownings from vehicles entering roadside creeks and ponds. Mr. Knowles was reportedly found in his upside down Dodge Ram pick-up truck, shortly before 1000 hours on Monday, April 22, 2013 in a drainage ditch that runs along Stewart Line just north of Wallaceburg, Ontario. Like many recent incidents there was never a barrier between the road and water. Essentially nothing has been said in the news media about this issue to warn the public about this danger.

Without conducting any detailed study it can be recalled that three teenagers likely drowned in a similar incident south of Alliston, Ontario in January. Two persons drowned in the Nith River off Highway 401 west of Kitchener, Ontario. A teenager drowned in off Lakeshore Boulevard in downtown Toronto. Six teenagers drown in Warren, Ohio. All under the same conditions of nearby water with inadequate barriers to prevent vehicles from entering the water.

Yet the official news media remain silent...

April 18, 2013

Double Fatal at Intersection of Highway 7 and Oxford County Road 119 (Perth County Road 118) - A Complicated Visibility Issue

Two occupants of a northbound car were killed when they attempted to cross the intersection of Highway 7 and were struck by a westbound straight truck. While police are blaming driver inattention to the stop signs as the cause of such events the scenario is often more complicated when it involves a left turn lane that requires the driver to travel a longer distance to cross a busy roadway. This is complicated by the fact that often vehicles in the left turn lane can block the view of the crossing driver of vehicles approaching in the through lane. The belief that a large truck could not be blocked from view by a small car fails to take into account that even a small car can be much larger in a driver's field of view when that car is close while the truck is at a longer distance. Furthermore, many drivers are deceived into believing there is only a single lane, instead of a left turn lane and a through lane because the low eye height of a car driver can make it difficult to detect a lane marking, especially when the road surface contains a significant cross-slope and makes the detection of that lane markings more difficult. Complicated issues like these are often misunderstood and brushed aside by persons who do not have a full grasp of the issue.

UPDATE: April 19, 2013; 1245 Hours

The two persons who were killed in yesterday's crash have now been identified as Anthony Bogoslawski, 79, of London and Audrey White, 78. They were driving northbound on Oxford County Road 119 in a Ford Taurus when they attempted to cross the intersection of Highway 7, south of St. Marys, Ontario.

It is necessary to illustrate two comments made on the London Free Press website with respect to this story:

Original Commenter: "Thats pretty bad. How about the truck driver? could it have been his excessive speed that caused the problem?"

Responding Commenter: "It clearly states in the article that the car crossed into the truck's path...regardless of this speed, if he's got the right of way, don't pull out - it's simple really..."

Attempting a reasonable discussion from such content can be pointless, however, we highlight this logic because it (frighteningly) exists amongst many officials including some in law enforcement, lawyers and even some judges.

The responding commenter states "It clearly states in the article that the car crossed into the truck's path...". It should not need repetition that you should not believe everything that is written, especially in the news media, but you should be prepared to evaluate all information that is presented for your consumption, including what we write on this website.

Secondly, the responding commenter states "...regardless of this speed, if he's got the right of way, don't pull out - it's simply really...". This logic is truly frightening because this is the way some seemingly sophisticated persons actually function in their reasoning. So, while we would normally ignore such commentary, it has to be addressed because the logic is held by just some persons who have control over the guilt or innocence of the public.

The "right of way" has been developed essentially for the convenience of adjudicating matters that are otherwise too complicated, or require too much time/resources to handle in an efficient manner. It often has little to do with who is guilty, whose actions affected the consequences or what factors entered into the issue. The "right of way" concept simply makes it more efficient to process these incidents. In reality the issue is much more complicated than who accelerated from a stop sign or who passed through at an uncontrolled intersection.

We will not delve into a deep and long discussion but we can simply take the issue of the speed of the approaching truck in this case as an example (while not suggesting that there is evidence of any blame on the truck driver's part in this case).

Elderly drivers require more time to pass safely through an intersection thus it would not be surprising that in the present scenario the time to clear the intersection could be 7 seconds. At a speed of 80 km/h (22.2 metres per second) the truck could travel about 155 metres, while at a speed of 120 km/h (33.3 metres per second) the truck could travel about 233 metres in those 7 seconds. Typical drivers have difficulty detecting the speed of approaching vehicles when they are at long distances, particularly on roadways that contain a curve. Not because there is something "wrong" about these drivers but it is simply a threshold of human ability that wavers from one driver to the next. We cannot expect to meet only the "Supermen" of drivers who perform at the 1 percent of ability but we must also accept that elderly drivers have a right to use our roads and their abilities to "see" might be reduced and the speed of their "decision-making" may be longer as well.

In the condition where the accelerating, elderly driver reaches the area of impact in 5 seconds and clears the path of the truck with 2 seconds to spare, there would obviously be no impact if the truck was travelling at 80 km/h. However, when that same truck driver is travelling at 120 km/h (33.3 metres per second) he covers that distance of 155 metres in about 4.6 seconds and an impact would occur. That is the effect of high speed. Although this analysis is simplified and hypothetical it clearly provides the reasoning why speed is a relevant factor.

In the present case the situation is likely much more complicated and it requires the consideration of many issues. When we read or hear the comments of some "experts" who provide an all-knowing, simple, assessment of anything we must first consider whether that fragrant poetry is not actually something flowing out of the nearby cow pasture.

UPDATE: April 20, 2013; 2350 Hours

We attended the site of this collision on the afternoon of April 19, 2013, however due to our commitments to our clients on paying assignments we may not be able to provide a full discussion and photos of our findings. We can say that there were no pre-crash tire marks visible on the roadway from the westbound straight truck. Although that could be related to the road conditions in combination with the characteristics of the truck's braking system, it may also suggest that the driver did not apply hard braking before the impact. We noted that the northbound traffic stop bar was positioned about 9.5 metres from the roadway centre-line and there was a further distance of 3.6 metres to the lane-dividing line between the left turn lane and the westbound through lane and finally there was an additional 4.1 metres to the north edge of the through lane. As the Taurus was struck when it was generally in the westbound through lane then it would have had to accelerate at least 17 metres from the time that it started its acceleration up to the point of impact. Such a long distance of acceleration would involve a substantial time and therefore the question that police need to answer is why there is no apparent evidence of braking from the truck. There could be acceptable reasons for this but we are not able to delve into a proper discussion of this case at this time.

April 17, 2013

SUV Driver In Critical Condition After Impact With Tree North-East of Stratford, Ontario

At approximately 0830 hours this morning, April 17, 2013, a Pontiac SUV travelling westbound on Perth County Road 32 drifted off the paved road surface and collided with a tree on the south roadside. The unidentified female driver sustained critical level injuries and was eventually air-lifted to a London, Ontario hospital.

We examined the collision site at approximately 1700 hours or about 9 hours after the occurrence. There were no tire marks on the paved road surface to indicate that the

driver of this vehicle lost directional control of her vehicle. Instead, there were tire marks on the south roadside indicating that the vehicle travelled directly toward the tree, and the left (driver's) portion of its front end impacted the tree.

Historically, the consequence of such a happening has usually resulted in fatal injuries as there is not enough structure in front of the driver in such a narrow contact to protect the driver from severe structural intrusion. However, with the advent of air bag systems and smart seat-belts with pre-tensioners the odds become more favourable toward survival. We hope that this is the case, although critical level injuries mean that there is a significant probability that the injuries that were sustained may be fatal.

What needs to be revealed is why this vehicle travelled directly toward the tree without any evidence of pre-crash rotation. Our examination of the evidence at the site will not reveal the reason for this motion. The police investigators are the only ones with sufficient information about the background to this event to enable them to take the appropriate actions. Unfortunately, although they may have the best evidence that might help them, which may include witness information, it does not guarantee that they will interpret the objective evidence properly.

We hope to find time to provide some photos and interpretation of that evidence on this website however that may not be possible. In the meantime the single photo below shows some indication of the characteristics of the tire marks leading toward the tree impact.



Characteristics of tire marks leading to the tree impact in the background.

April 12, 2013

Pole Fallen on Pedestrian At Oxford & Adelaide in London, Ontario Results in Critical Injuries

There is no panacea in road safety as the adjustments we make to make drivers safer can have a side-effect in making some scenarios more dangerous. Although information is still scarce it would appear that such was the case in a collision this morning at the busy intersection of Oxford Street and Adelaide Street in London, Ontario. A collision between vehicles caused one to slide backwards into a traffic signal pole that apparently fell onto to pedestrian.

Poles like this are made to break away to lessen the severity of the impact to the occupants of the vehicle. This is particularly important when the side of a vehicle makes contact with such a pole because the possibility fatal injuries is not exaggerated, even in urban settings where speeds might be lower. But when a large pole falls over there is always the chance that it may strike a nearby pedestrian. And unfortunately, this is possibly what occurred this morning.

The photo below shows a view of the pole that had been knocked over and subsequently removed, leaving a temporary signal system in replacement.



View, looking north, toward a traffic island containing the traffic signal pole that was knocked over in the north-west sector of the intersection at Oxford and Adelaide Streets this morning, April 12, 2013,

Since one would not want these poles to fall over from just minor impacts it is important for road maintenance personnel to examine these pole bases to make sure that they will still perform like they were designed.

The photo below shows the base of the fallen pole.



View of base of fallen pole at the intersection of Oxford and Adelaide Streets.

And the photo below shows the remaining portion of the frangible base that broke apart.



View of frangible base of pole that broke apart allowing the pole to fall over.

UPDATE: April 15, 2013; 2300 Hours

It is now confirmed that the pedestrian struck by the falling lamp standard has passed away. He is identified as 41-year-old Santino Ayom of London.

April 11, 2013

Officials Confirm That Defective Takata Air Bag Components Cause Fires and Injuries - But Defect Extremely Unlikely To Be Detected

Four Japanese automakers will be recalling about 3.4 million vehicles due to a defect in their air bags originating from their mutual supplier Takata Corporation. This announcement was distributed widely in the official news media on April 11, 2013. This defect existed in vehicles as old as the model year 2000.

But we pose the following hypothetical question: If we had a time machine and returned to any of those years of 2001 through 2012, how would a typical police, private reconstructionist or engineering investigation uncover this defect? One of the reported side-effects of the defect is that the air bag could catch fire and that would be an easier way to recognize a problem. But these bags do not always catch fire. The defect notice

indicates that the defective air bag could result in excessive injury because it could deploy "...with too much pressure..." but how would a typical investigator prove that this occurred? So, we ask again, how would any of these investigations determine that an occupant struck by this defective air bag suffered greater injury than reasonable? It is almost impossible to do so without having information about the manufacturers' algorithm that is the "brains" which determines how and when to deploy, or information about other components of the system, or the characteristics of the propellant used to deploy an air bag. But that information is secret. When the manufacturers claim that "...there were no reports of injuries or deaths because of the defective airbags" what is the likelihood that such reports would develop when it is almost impossible for almost all investigators to prove that relationship? It is reported that officials did not recognize a problem until the year 2012 for vehicles that were being manufactured as far back as the year 2000. This defect existed for at least 12 years without being detected.

While it is understandable that any business might want its trade secrets to remain secret if they had spent large amounts of time and money to develop them, there also has to be a right of the general public to be informed when products exist that could potentially kill them.

April 9, 2013

Fatal Transport Truck Collision with General Dynamics Building in London, Ontario

Details are still not available but a transport truck reportedly struck the General Dynamics Building at 1991 Oxford Street East in London, Ontario this morning around 0230 hours. The plant builds the military vehicles used by many western forces. The transport truck driver was reportedly killed. Further details will be forthcoming.

UPDATE: April 9, 2013, 1115 Hours

The London Free Press now appears to have corrected its information about the location of the crash and are now reporting that it occurred at the Veterans Memorial Parkway and Page Street site of General Dynamics. The Truck was northbound when it went off the right side of the road.

UPDATE: April 9, 2013, 1315 Hours

We have completed an examination of the collision site and will be preparing an article on the Articles page of this website shortly. A few photos below will provide some general context of where the accident site is located.



View, looking north, along Veterans Memorial Parkway from just south of the intersection with Page Street. The General Dynamics building is located on the right side of the view. The truck drove off the road to the right and into the ditch in the right background.

The photo below shows the tire marks in the right (east) ditch where the truck exited just on the north side of the Page Street intersection.



View, looking northeast toward truck's tire marks on the east ditch of Veterans Memorial Parkway, just north of Page Street.

The photo below shows a further view along the truck's tire marks as they travel toward a security fence in the background.



View, looking north, along the truck's tire marks at they pass through the east ditch and travel toward the General Dynamics security fence in the background.

UPDATE: April 9, 2013, 2200 Hours

We have now uploaded an article on our Articles webpage discussing the evidence we found at the site of this crash.

April 8, 2013

Double Fatal Collision on Perth Road 180 North of Dublin, Ontario

It is reported that a collision involving two vehicles north of Dublin, Ontario this morning at approximately 1000 hours has resulted in two fatalities. Roads have been closed around the perimeter of the intersection of Perth Road 180 and Bridge Road(39th Line) and this often suggests that the impact occurred at, or near that intersection however no details of the precise location have been provided at this time (1150 hours).

It would not be unusual for a police reconstructionist to arrive perhaps two hours after the initial reporting of the accident thus such a person might only now be arriving to

review the evidence and begin its mapping. Given the probability of rain entering the area later this afternoon police reconstructionists will have to work a little quicker to gather their field data before more fragile evidence is destroyed by the rain.

April 8, 2013, 1535 Hours

The most recent information is that Brian Crawford, 52 and his son, Bradley Crawford, 29, were travelling westbound on Line 39 (Bridge Road) when their Buick Rendezvous failed to stop at the stop sign thus travelling into the path of a southbound feed truck. Both were killed in the crash.

In many such intersection situations there can be the appearance that someone failed to stop at a stop sign when further inquiry indicates that the vehicle on the main road was speeding. Thus it is important to determine the basis for the conclusion that a vehicle failed to stop for a stop sign. The Buick Rendezvous was most likely equipped with an event data recorder ("Black Box") therefore a news reporter should be asking the question: "Was the determination based on a download of the vehicle's "Black Box?" It might appear that this would be an obvious way for police to reach the conclusion but it is surprising how often information can get to the public based on flimsy evidence. Certainly, when the collision only occurred at 1000 hours this morning the time required for a reconstructionist to attend the site and conduct a download of the EDR data and have its results reliably interpreted to inform the media by the afternoon is rather quick.

April 5, 2013

All Traffic Safety Issues Affected by 32 Trillion Dollars Hidden In Off- Shore Tax Havens

Every aspect of our society is affected when money is illegally hidden in off-shore tax havens. But since this website is dedicated to road safety and accident reconstruction our focus is on this narrow issue.

The news did not hit the front page of most official news media but the repercussions of the recent revelations of massive tax havens will inevitably reach a large segment of the population sooner or later. The news, as reported locally by the Toronto Star newspaper on Friday, April 5, 2013 is that 2.5 million documents were released by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) recently detailing how an estimated 32 Trillion dollars worth of funds has been stashed away by the very rich of this world in off-shore tax havens.

While essentially every world government is fighting large deficits little if anything is said to whom that government debt is owed. The madness has reached crisis points throughout Europe as Greece, Spain, Ireland, Cyprus...etc, etc, are at the breaking point

of being unable to handle their public debts. We have seen how the offered solution has been to introduce austerity measures upon the general citizenry via tax increases and service cuts. At no point was there ever a mention that another issue was at play, that being that, wherever there is a debit there is also a credit. Whenever someone owes something, it is also owed to someone. When you just focus on the debit without admitting that, on the flip side of the coin, there is also a credit, you are simply perpetrating a large lie. When the extremely rich hide extremely large sums of funds it artificially creates the appearance to the public that there is a deficit that cannot be resolved because there is no money.

In the narrow realm of road safety and accident reconstruction we can see the effects of this hidden and untaxed money. In Canada numerous municipalities are raising the alarm that the country's infrastructure of roads, bridges and sewers is crumbling. But there is no money to fix that because the country is running a deficit.

In the narrow realm of the courts and the justice system, personal defendants have seen reductions in legal aid so they cannot hire lawyers to defend them in serious motor vehicle accidents where they can face major charges. Legal aid is reduced because there is no money because the country is running a deficit.

In the realm of policing, there is barely enough money to chase after the development of local terrorism, but there is certainly not enough money to have a police officer arrive at a "minor" accident site and be the objective witness to document what actually occurred. When that "minor" injury turns out to be a soft tissue injury that debilitates the injured party there is little objective information available to determine whether the injury is real or a lie. And if insurers can demonstrate that this was a fraud then they do not have to pay the fraudulent person's expenses. The creation of some of these frauds is directly related to the fact that there is not enough money for proper investigation because there is a large public debt.

Police departments are scrambling to make money to support their activities and the solution has been to charge large amounts of money for their accident investigation documents - materials that we supposedly developed because the citizenry has already paid for them via the taxes that they pay. And why is this so? Because there is no money to properly support police budgets because the country is running a deficit.

Hospitals are experiencing cutbacks to the extent that in recent years attendance of injured persons at emergency departments has been discouraged because these departments are having trouble receiving the large number of persons in their waiting rooms. But there is a shortage because steps had to be taken because there was not enough money because there is a large government deficit.

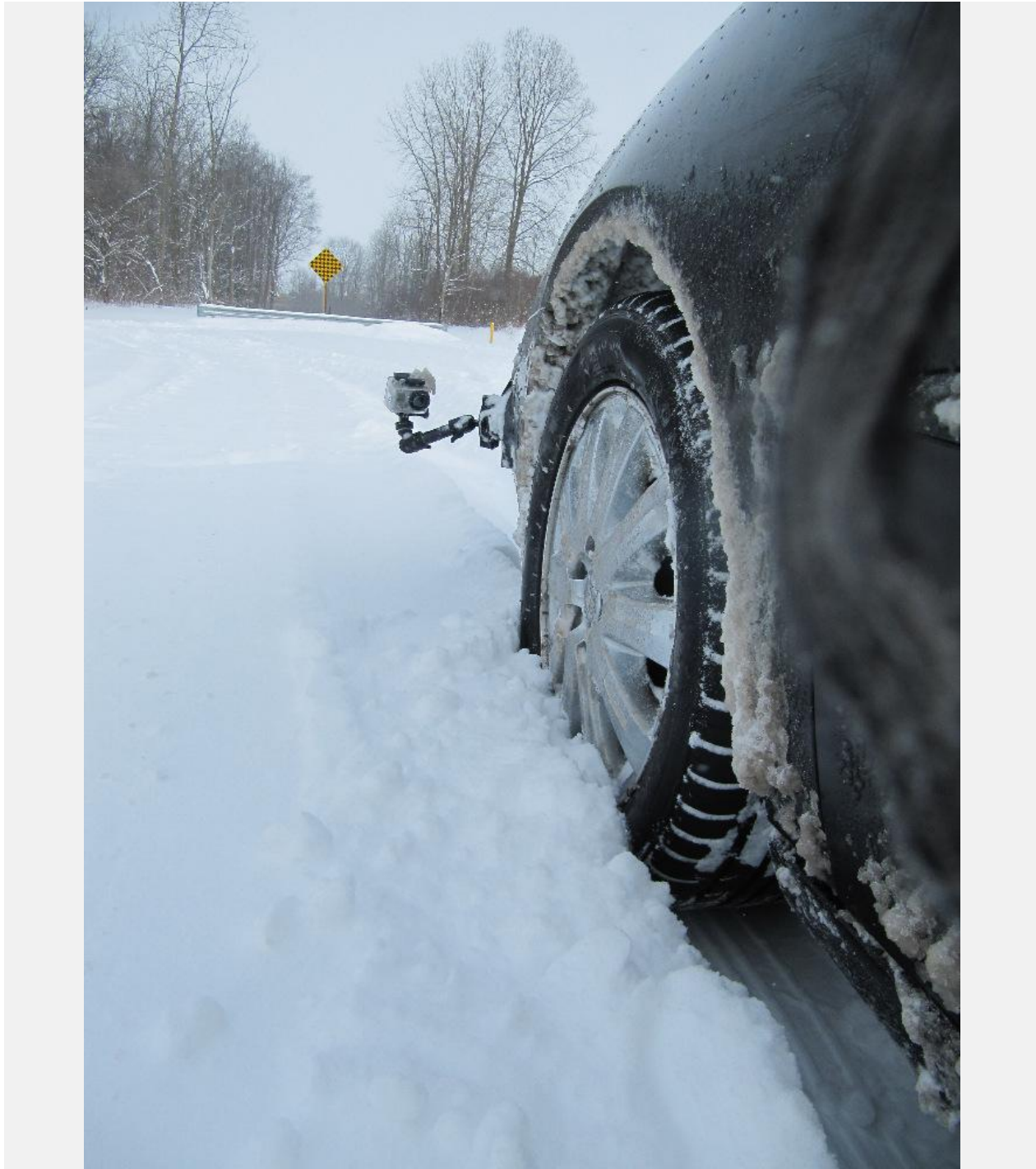
The examples could continue but our point has been made.

In our view it is only inevitable that, as austerity measures continue, and news of the hidden tax shelters continue, more people will be awaking to this strong dose of reality. The social unrest that could develop does not need to occur and there is still time and an opportunity for all of us to lay the cards on the table and turn the ship around before it falls over the edge of this obviously flat earth.

April 4, 2013

iPhone Accelerometer Results From 45 Emergency Braking Tests On Snow-Covered Roads

In a continuing series of tests employing multiple video cameras and other instruments, Gorski Consulting completed a set of 45 emergency braking tests on snow-covered roads on February 8, 2013 on roads in the City of London, Ontario, Canada as well as on rural highways in the city's vicinity.



View of GoPro28 video camera pointing at the left front wheel of the test vehicle during brake testing on snow-covered roadways on February 8, 2013.

The purpose of the testing was to examine the functioning of the iPhone's accelerometer and gyro displays to determine whether they can be used as reliable accident reconstruction tools. The testing also allowed for collection of data on the slipperiness of various snow-covered road surfaces that included asphalt, tar and chip and gravel. Testing was conducted at speeds between 22 and 70 km/h. Some testing was performed

travelling in reverse gear. The detailed results of this testing are included in a new article that has been uploaded to the Articles page of this website.

Lack of Transparency Expected in Death Investigation of Guelph Constable Jennifer Kovach

Given recent, previous actions by various police departments when members of their force are involved in major collisions, we do not expect much transparency and minimal useful information when the results will be made public "soon", as reported in a Kitchener Record newspaper article, regarding the tragic traffic death of Constable Jennifer Kovach on a Guelph, Ontario Street on March 14, 2013.

This is already apparent from the manner in which the damage to Kovach's police cruiser was shown only very briefly by a single news outlet. It is only from the present Kitchener Record article that we have learned that the direct damage to her cruiser was to its right side. If this is so, and her vehicle was travelling with speed around a right curve then that would be an unusual occurrence. But since we are unable to see the specific pattern of that damage we cannot say anything further. It is this type of non-disclosure that only feeds suspicions that the investigation is not taking a proper course. Basic information such as the damage to the cruiser should be allowed to be viewed by the public so that experienced persons such as ourselves, who have no ties to the outcome of the investigation, can evaluate and assure others that the investigation is being carried out properly. Certainly the average citizen is completely incapable of making any reasonable assessment and will accept whatever information is being fed, whether that information is reasonable or not.

The decision by Guelph police to conduct the investigation in-house also places some doubt on the impartiality of the investigation as the police force itself could be found partially at fault if its training, policies or other actions led Constable Kovach to be involved in the crash. When this decision is accompanied by a lack of disclosure of the basic facts of the collision we become critical of the process.

At What Collision Severity Should We Expect An Air Bag Deployment?

An important question that many lawyers ask, but are rarely given a satisfying answer, is whether an air bag should have deployed, or not deployed, and when an investigation should be commenced to determine whether a defective system exists. This information is essentially held in secret by motor vehicle manufacturers.

Government agencies have determined that the information is a trade secret yet they have mandated that air bags be installed in North American vehicles. In the mid-1990's we saw a tragic number of deaths caused by air bag deployments during which time a proper explanation was never provided to the public how each manufacturer determines that an air bag should be deployed, at what velocity, what displacement and so on. We

have never agreed with that logic and have always believed that when the public's life and death are at stake, it should take precedence over business competitiveness.

Recently a Ford engineer took some of the mystery out of the his manufacturer's magic box of tricks by providing the following reasonably understandable explanation for when an air bag should be expected to deploy on an equipped Ford vehicle:

"If you limit the discussion to full frontal barrier crashes, the barrier equivalent velocity threshold in most mid-late 2000's Fords is 8-12 mph for an unbelted occupant stage 1 frontal airbag, and 12-16 mph for a belted stage 1 frontal airbag. There are front auxiliary electronic crash sensors that sense the crash first and the algorithm double integrates the acceleration data from both to see if there is relative displacement (physical crush) occurring, if so it makes the deployment decision much quicker. In most EDR's you don't get to see the front crash sensor data which may be playing a larger part in the deployment decision, so it should be no surprise that we have only general correlation between ACM final Delta V and deployment decisions. In the bad old days I've seen early onset events where at 1.5 Delta V the system predicted an 8-14 barrier equivalent hit and deployed but it was "only" a snowplow trip where the rest of the pulse never materialized and the final Delta V was only 2-3 mph, yet bags were hanging out. There are some research papers that tried to tabulate deploy and non-deploy decisions by total Delta V for a moderate size sample of crashes, there was a wide grey zone where the bag may or may not deploy."

For those who are technically challenged there are some definitions that need to be explained so the above can be better understood. "Full Frontal Barrier Crashes" are those crashes that you see being performed by government agencies such as NHTSA where you will find dummies inside and the test is often run at a speed of 30 mph (50 km/h). The full front of the vehicle makes contact with the immovable, non-crushing barrier such that the only object that sustains crush is the impacting vehicle.

The barrier equivalent velocity threshold at which the air bag will deploy is the scenario which is equivalent to a vehicle involved in a "Full Front Barrier Crash" and this distinction is important. Many real-life crashes will occur where a vehicle travelling at 50 km/h collides head-on with another vehicle travelling 50 km/h in the other direction. If both vehicles come to rest at the area of impact one might generally state that each vehicle sustained a change-in-velocity (or Delta-V) of 50 km/h. However because the structures of both vehicles were involved in dissipating the kinetic energy of the crash this collision severity will not be as severe as the Barrier Equivalent Velocity change where only the single vehicle is deformed to dissipate that kinetic energy. So when the engineer discusses thresholds of 8-12 mph and 12-16 mph it is important to understand that this refers to Barrier Equivalent Velocity, not real-life velocity change that occurs when two vehicles collide in a head-on collision.

The "Stage 1" deployment is referring to the initial stage of air bag deployment that must be decided upon extremely early in the collision, certainly within the first 25 milli-

seconds of from initial contact. A second Stage of deployment may take place if it is determined that the occupant is unrestrained and requires "more protection" than afforded by the initial Stage 1 deployment.

"Integration" in the present scenario is a mathematical operation performed on the acceleration pulse that is sensed by the decision-making "brains" of the air bag control module (ACM), whereby velocity history is developed and then from that velocity history a displacement history is developed.

The engineer is stating that the change-in-velocity (Delta-v) that is recorded by an event data recorder ("Black Box") and is retrieved for study is only one part of the calculation that is visible to the analyst and that information from "front crash sensor data" is not available while it may contain more information about the decision-making process whether to deploy or not to deploy.

This explanation is one of the better and useful ones that I have recently come across. There remains an element of Houdini-ism in all of this however we have no control over that and have already stated our disagreement with it.

April 3, 2013

Extent of Law Suit Fear Demonstrated In Brantford's Bazaar Snow Clearing Actions

Brantford resident Sam Di Fronzo must be scratching his head after receiving an explanation from the City of Brantford why they sent out four trucks to clear a small amount of snow out of a cul-de-sac dead end near his home. As it was not the first time this occurred he took some photos of the operation and sent them to the Mayor requesting an explanation. As explained in an article by Hugo Rodrigues of the Brantford Expositor newspaper, the City's manager of risk management, Brian McEnhill, stated that the city received a claim from someone who drove through a cul-de-sac pile of snow. Rodrigues wrote "When the claim was filed and landed on his desk, McEnhill looked at what the city's responsibilities are under provincial road regulations".



Photo from Brantford Expositor taken by resident Sam Di Fronzo showing a grouping of four trucks removing a small amount of snow.

"Minimum maintenance standards for municipal highways would classify most cul-de-sacs in the category of road where 10 centimetres of snow must, under regulation, be cleared within 24 hours. Patrols to estimate the accumulated snow would have to take place a minimum of every 30 days".

McEnhill was quoted as saying "My determination on the cul-de-sacs is that when we pile the snow in the middle, we should be pushing it to the curb," McEnhill said. "According to the procedure sent to operational services, that should take place. They decided to put it in the middle, so it must be cleared."

The truly revealing statement from McEnhill was the following: "...the regulation doesn't allow for mushy middles or grey areas. If the accumulated snow is seen, it must be removed". And further: "From a legal perspective, it's fairly clear. We either meet the standard or we don't. We comply or we don't comply. If a claim reaches court, the argument will be whether we followed the (minimum standards)".

But what Mr. McEnhill states in not quite so. The courts have already interpreted that the Minimum Maintenance Standards (MMS) are incomplete and the courts have tried to use their discretion, as they should, in determining what makes sense. What Mr. McEnhill states makes no sense what-so-ever. The amount of snow shown in the accompanying photo is extremely small and should not need removal, especially by four trucks, on a holiday when the payment to employees it often double time, which was Mr. Di Fronzo's main complaint.

These standards were the result of the Mike Harris "common sense revolution" where Harris went about re-shaping Ontario, throwing out a number of safe guards, and citizens' rights, in order to reduce costs that he claimed were required to eliminate waste. Minimum Maintenance Standards were enacted to protect municipalities from legal responsibility for their improper actions that could be adjudicated in a court of law.

But these MMS also caused risk managers to take unreasonable interpretations of them in the belief that any non-compliance to them, regardless of what makes sense, will cause a municipality to be found liable. The purpose of the MMS was to prevent judges from deciding in a court of law what made sense and this is exactly what the municipalities received. But now they are caught in the very web that they agreed to have created. Regardless of what makes sense, the citizens of Ontario are "benefiting" by sending four trucks on a holiday to collect a little clump of snow out of a dead end cul-de-sac.

No wonder Mr. Di Fronzo is irritated.

April 2, 2013

Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) Ratchets Up Publicity of Unsafe Collision Scenarios

While NHTSA has become disappointing in its lack of action to do the very job it was created to do, the insurance industry took action a number of years ago by creating their own "watchdog" organization called the "Insurance Institute for Highway Safety" (IIHS). While the IIHS has embarrassed NHTSA with a number of its crash tests demonstrating the lacking of standards to protect the travelling public, their actions in recent years has ratcheted up that criticism through its demonstrations of crash tests that the NHTSA essentially ignores.

Recently we observed how the IIHS conducted narrow front impacts where the frontal structure failed to protect occupants because the direct contact was too far to the left edge of the frontal crush zone to provide any meaningful protection resulting in tremendous intrusion into the driver's seated space. Although we had some criticisms of the apparent manipulations in the test, overall it was beneficial in that it made the public aware of this type of crash scenario that has been ignored for decades, while NHTSA has been fully aware of the issue.

Now, a new video has been put out by IIHS showing the inadequacy of rear guards on the rear of typical truck trailers that collapse and allow the striking vehicle to submarine under the guard resulting in massive intrusion. This phenomenon has also been known to NHTSA for decades without any meaningful action taken.

Overall, we are impressed with IIHS's recent actions. This appears to be a body that is addressing real life issues that is making the public aware of NHTSA's inaction.

Global Road Safety Partnership Places Many Accepted Norms In Perspective

Another example of the benefits of the internet is our receipt of news from organizations outside of the regular stream. For the last couple of years we have been on the e-mail list of the Global Road Safety Partnership (GRSP). This group advertises itself as a non-non-profit organization formed in 1999 and "hosted" by the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. It's "Vision" is "A world free of road crash death and injury". This is why it caught our attention. It also caught our attention because it appears to operate in Europe but also in many of the developing nations where many modern road and motor vehicle safety devices are still being introduced.

As an example, in this month's newsletter they discuss actions to increase seat-belt use in the Turkish city of Afyon where the seat-belt usage rate is reported to be about 8 percent. That figure resonates in our mind when we think of the extremely high usage rates that have been accomplished in Canada. It really puts things in perspective as we have seen so many needless deaths and injuries primarily because drivers and occupants were unrestrained.

We also note the GRSP's discussion of the European Union's efforts to unify the definition of "serious injury". This discussion could appear quite dry to many readers of our website. However, as road safety researchers, we recognize the importance of using standard definitions when reporting injury levels. Reportedly, the EU has decided to use the definition of the Abbreviated Injury Scale (AIS), and specifically the "Maximum Abbreviated Injury Score (MAIS)". Again, this information may be rather dry to most readers but our original research activities at the University of Western Ontario Multi-Disciplinary Accident Research Team involved a constant use of the AIS. We were constantly translating injuries from hospital records into the AIS codes as part of our reports to Transport Canada. It is reassuring to note that both North America and the EU will now officially be using the same definitions when comparing injury data.

Gorski Consulting
London, Ontario, Canada

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