

Gorski Consulting Website

Archived News - 2016 - September

September 30, 2016

Decline of Professional Journalism - The Good & Bad For Road Safety



Professional journalists are in danger of being swallowed up by the new internet monster.

No doubt, professional journalism is lying on its death bed as the official news-gathering sleuths continue their decline. This warning was obviously expressed yesterday by the chair of Torstar, John Honderich, which publishes Canada's largest newspaper, The Toronto Star. As an example, The Toronto Star's army of 470 news-gathering journalist has dwindled to just 170.

What may be taking the professional journalists' place is a new army of Twitters and Facebooks where persons communication information more freely and less formally. This may be good but it may also be bad.

With respect to the reporting of motor vehicle collisions more information may be released more quickly to a select audience of those who follow those internet sites. This has an advantage as information that was often excluded for partisan reasons is now

available for the audience to evaluate on their own. However, it has been said, the free information of the internet can be as good as what the audience paid for it. Loud and aggressive internet "talk" does not necessarily lead to truthful and reliable information. This leads to many wife's tales and gossip being accepted for something as good as anything else. Thus many may be exposed to more information but the problem is that the information cannot be properly interpreted by those who have no clue about what the information really means. Thus the need for professional journalists.

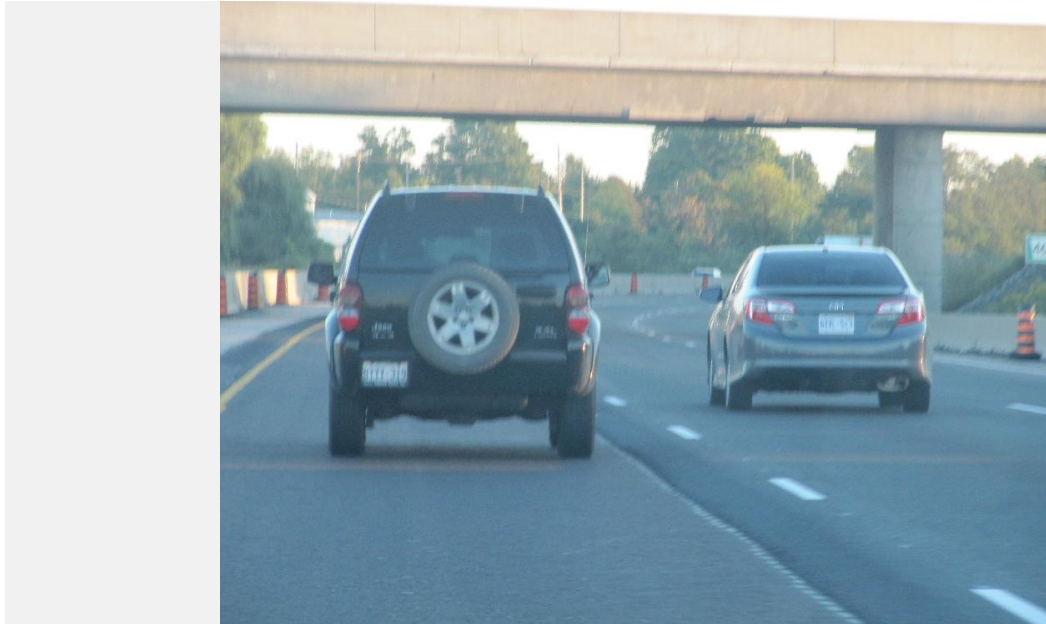
Mr. Honderich has referred to shrinking newsrooms as a "crisis" to our Canadian Democracy. Such a view has been expressed by Gorski Consulting in the past. Issues crucial to the safety of the travelling public are not being properly revealed because the news items simply report a happening without reporting what that happening means. In many instances slick propaganda replaces fact without the reader being fully aware of it.

A true crisis exists in that the new amateur journalism has very few controls. Thus many times content is placed that is inappropriate or unethical. Whereas professional journalists have had some degree of training and are somewhat controlled by their news managers, a twitter can literally write anything. In many instances internet bullying takes the form of personality acts or destruction of a persons identity simply because someone was accused of causing a significant collision. Without proper information person's reputations are ruined by such postings. There was some degree of restraint when professional journalists understood that you provide facts, not unsupported judgments.

Thus we agree, there is a crisis in the reporting of information in our realm of collision reconstruction and road safety. Hopefully these are short-term growing pains.

September 26, 2016

Factors That Could Kill Us - and Continue to Kill Us



Nothing was mentioned and no one was warned, however a new policy appears to be in place with respect to the repaving procedures on Highway 401 that could prove deadly.

While police continue a propaganda campaign that focuses on driver behaviour, the reality is that collision occurrence, and death from it, is more complicated.

As an example, no one made any mention of the apparent sudden change in policy with respect to re-paving on the most highly-travelled highway in Canada, Highway 401, where, without notice, procedures during re-paving were changed. Whereas in previous years there was a concern that vehicles not be subjected to extreme changes in elevation of the road surface during repaving, that changed. As shown in the photo above, it would appear that someone decided it would be "OK" to allow vehicles to travel at 120 km/h along the lanes of Highway 401 even though one of those lanes was "not-yet-re-paved", thus leaving a large elevation difference between the newly paved lanes, and the "not-yet-re-paved lane". It was deemed acceptable to simply create a little "ramp" between the two conditions.

We drive vehicles of multiple characteristics. Some drive large and heavy tractor-trailers where such elevation changes are irrelevant. But some of us ride motorcycles, or older vehicles with substandard (but legal) suspensions. Some of us actually drive Jeeps or similar vehicles with high centres-of-gravity and short wheel-bases. These differences matter when crossing a sharp change in elevation at 120 km/h without sufficient notice.

But someone with an "economics" degree in risk assessment examined the collision statistics and determined that there was an increased risk of loss-of-control that was outweighed by the cost reduction in having traffic controls in construction zones that would keep vehicles from crossing over such elevation changes. Do we know for sure? Certainly not, but how would we ever know for certain? We only see something that is a potential, deadly, hazard. No one provided any information to anyone with respect to what the consequences would be.

In another instance, a new section of Highway 407 leading eastward to Highway 412 east of Toronto, Ontario saw the installation of new guardrail terminals that have never been installed before, as shown in the figure below.



New guardrail terminals installed along a new section of Highway 407. Were the old terminals as safe as they claimed to be?

Most persons would not be aware that other terminals from Trinity Highway Products of Dallas Texas had been installed throughout Ontario, and also throughout North America, until suddenly there was an allegation that the terminals were unsafe. Yet, the U.S. Federal Highway Administration determined that there was no evidence to support those allegations. And the Ontario Ministry of Transportation also supported the position that there was not need to replace the terminals that have lined most of the highways in the province. But, mysteriously, these terminals have suddenly stopped being installed without any notice to the general public. Why? If the terminals were indeed as safe as proclaimed, why are so many jurisdictions jumping to a new manufacturer?

In case one believes that our sole focus is on road deficiencies, that is not the case. We recognize that humans are a major problem, we just have a strange way of focusing on some issues and not on others. For example, there is a legitimate concern with drivers using various distracting devices while driving. Most notably actions such as texting on a smartphone while driving. Yet, pedestrians also use such devices while walking, and sometimes while walking into traffic, as shown in the photo below.



While drivers cannot even touch a cell phone in their vehicle, a pedestrian can stand in the middle of a road and play with a cell-phone without any outcry.

This action will kill us as quickly as being the driver of a vehicle.

Life is complicated.

As another example, we all recognize the dangers that exist to workers in roadway construction zones. That danger exists because we do not appreciate the danger that we create, whether we are the driver passing through such a zone or the worker who is temporarily distracted with their work that they do not recognize that a danger has developed.

As shown in the photo below, a worker has come uncomfortably close the edge of the work area that is surrounded by construction cones.



A worker is busy on a work assignment without recognizing that he has come too close to the edge of the defined zone protected by traffic cones.

Yes, this is a problem that drivers must be prepared to encounter, but the problem can be two-sided. As shown below, the worker may recognize the danger too late.



Roadway construction zones are always a source of potential danger - most notably for the workers on the road - but the cause of the problem is not always one-sided.

Every human, whether they are a driver in a car, or a worker on a construction site, is capable of a momentary lapse in concentration which can be deadly.

We also recognize the important duties of police and their need to attend to an emergency. Thus, at times they must pass through traffic with lights and sirens activated and high speeds. While there are laws that require the public to pull over and allow

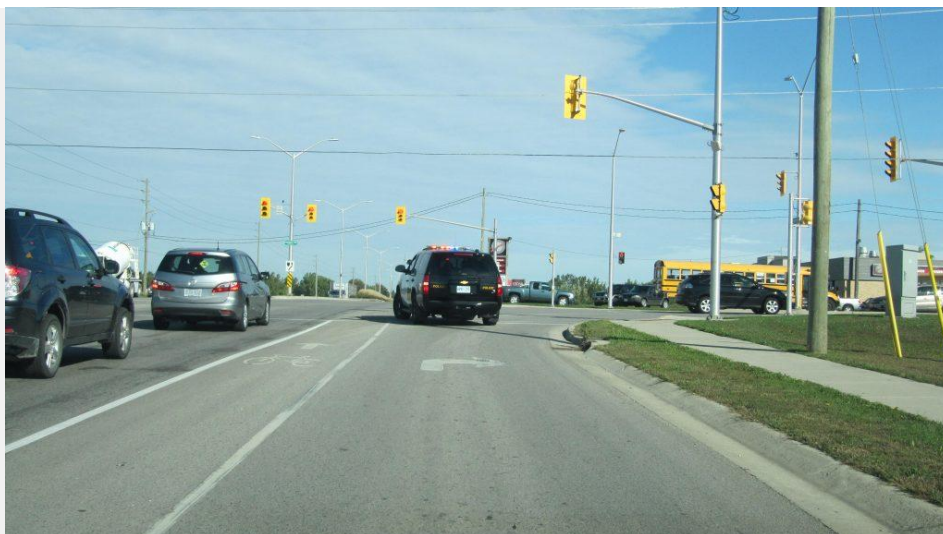
emergency vehicles to pass though, the reality is sometimes more complicated. Take the following as an example.

In the photo below we see an intersection ahead where a black police SUV is located in the distant background, in the far right-turn lane. The traffic signal is red for the police vehicle.



View looking toward an intersection in London, Ontario where a police SUV is located in the far right lane.

It is likely that the officer receives a sudden call to attend an emergency because, with little warning, the roof lights and siren become activated and the police vehicle begins to move to the left across the traffic lanes, as shown in the photo below. This may be OK because the traffic signal is still red and vehicles would not be expected to advance.



With little warning the police officer activates the roof lights and siren and begins to move across the lanes of traffic when the traffic signal is still red.

However, as shown in the photo below, the traffic signal turns green well before the police vehicle passes through the lanes of traffic. In many instances a driver may hear a siren but is unable to detect the direction from which it is coming. An accepted procedure would be for drivers to clear the intersection and pull to the right to stop, without detecting that the police vehicle could be present.



Drivers may hear the police siren but may not detect where the sound is coming from as this police SUV crosses in front of traffic on a traffic signal that has just turned green.

Again, reality is more complicated than the laws that attempt to control these conflicts.

There are many of us who have quick and ready-made solutions to our world. In the case of traffic collision reconstruction such black and white reasoning has no place. While it is OK for the arm-chair quarterback to preach about the facts that are obvious to them, reconstructionists have a higher duty to assure that quick judgments are not made, that all the information (as best possible) is gathered, and a methodical, unbiased analysis is carried out irrespective of what parties may be involved.

September 7, 2016

While OPP Reported Deadliest Weekend in 20 Years, Little of Detail Provided to Effect A Change

The head-line in various news articles is eye-catching: "Deadliest Labor Day Weekend In 20 Years". Twelve road fatalities were reported in OPP patrolled roadways in Ontario. However, beyond catching the a reader's interest, what useful benefit did the head-line provide? Not very much.

Three or four decades ago road fatalities in Ontario were near 1000 per year. Those numbers have dropped by 2/3rds in recent years. The public knew as little about the details of how those fatalities occurred as they know now. Although vast improvements have been made those improvements have very little to do with driver behaviour other than increased seat-belt use and some inroads in alcohol impairment.

Drivers drove too quickly decades ago as they do now.

Decades ago drivers were driving distracted. Only now "distracted" has become a buzz word because it can be monitored through smart phone use and similar technologies. However decades ago drivers were still looking down to change the tapes in their 8-tracks, pressing on their cigarette lighter to light their cigarettes or reaching into the back seat to fetch another cold one out of the cooler. When a crash occurred there was little ability to check on some electronic instrument that told investigators when the cooler door was last opened.

However, 3 or 4 decades ago vehicle technology was much simpler. Big, rear-wheel drive gas-guzzlers, with simple power braking and steering, often no electronic ignitions and power boosting included simple, increased sizes of engine blocks and larger exhausts. When a crash occurred it did not require much specialization in the training of a auto mechanic to recognize that a tie-rod had separated, a master-cylinder was leaking or that someone was riding on worn tires. Today, much of everything is controlled by electronics of sensors and modules whose exact functioning can only be revealed by an manufacturer's technician with the "golden key" of the scanning tool. While police and private reconstructionists operate "Crash Data Retrieval" kits whereupon certain data can be translated from a vehicle's memory, much of the source code contains untranslated data with no assurance of what the manufacturer can gain from the additional data.

The bottom line is that many collisions that occurred over the recent long weekend are simply mysterious events. Sure there were impaired drivers and distracted drivers, but there were also other unexplained and unreported incidents and events that the public knew nothing about.

As an example, although electronic stability control is gaining a larger and larger foothold in the vehicle fleet, numerous collisions occurred this week involving single-vehicle, loss-of-control. As an example on September 1, 2016 the front end of a transport truck struck the left side of a pick-up truck in a "head-on" collision on Highway 3 near Windsor. When was the last time you saw a pick-up travelling at highway speed, leading with its driver's side along any major highway? Although no details were provided it is highly likely that the Pick-up truck had gone into pre-crash rotation and that could have been an important fact. Although this was a two-vehicle collision it was really a loss-of-control collision of a single vehicle, it just so happened that another vehicle (the TT) happened to be present in the path of that pick-up truck.

Again, on September 4, 2016 the lone driver of an Acura vehicle was reportedly found deceased in a ditch of Wellington County Road 21 south of Elora, Ontario. It was only stated that the vehicle left the roadway for "unknown reasons". Speculation from family members suggested he died because of lack seat-belt use and speed. However were those conclusions drawn from an official investigation?

Again, on September 3, 2016, two occupants of a Mazda were killed when their vehicle went out of control on the gravel surface of Perth Road 149, north of St. Marys, Ontario and struck a tree. Why did it occur? No information.

Again, on September 3, 2016 a single vehicle reportedly went out of control "near Highway 407 and Highway 27" in Vaughan, striking a guardrail. A driver sustained serious injuries. As there was no indication that the vehicle struck an object other than the rail, one would question why the driver had to be "extricated" from the vehicle as the rail should have simply allowed the vehicle to hug the rail and come to a relatively controlled stop.

Again, on September 3, 2016, a female passenger of a car had to be air-lifted to a London Hospital after the driver of her vehicle lost control and the vehicle struck a tree on Confederation Line near Sarnia, Ontario. No information was provided as to why this occurred on a Sunday morning at 1000 hours as, in most cases, alcohol-impairment would be less likely at such a time.

Again, on September 4, 2016, the driver of a Volkswagen GTI lost control of the vehicle on Plank Road, south of Vienna, Ontario and the rollover occurred. A 20-year-old male passenger of the vehicle sustained life-threatening injuries. While the charges against the driver including an "over 80 mg alcohol", there was no explanation how the passenger sustained his injuries as there was no indication of a ejection. Certainly rollovers can result in intrusion of a roof but that result does not necessarily result in life-threatening injuries if the occupant is restrained by a seat-belt and other safety devices such as a side, airbag curtain. This facts could have been explained.

Again, on September 5, 2016, a vehicle went out of control "near Mount Pleasant Road and Roxborough Drive in Toronto. A male occupant sustained fatal injuries. Damage to the vehicle suggested there were at least two narrow impacts similar to that of striking a pole however these contacts were to the left front and left-rear fenders, thus there was no obvious intrusion into the occupant space. The news media have a habit of publishing photographs of the undamaged sides of many vehicles thus no one can truly appreciate how an injury might have occurred. However, with the limited information available, there was no obvious reason for the fatality as there was no indication that the fatally injured occupant had been ejected.

Again, on September 5, 2016, a male occupant was killed in a rollover on Essex County Road 22 near Windsor. It was reported that the deceased had been ejected from his vehicle. A dark photo showed the vehicle lying upside down at its final rest position but

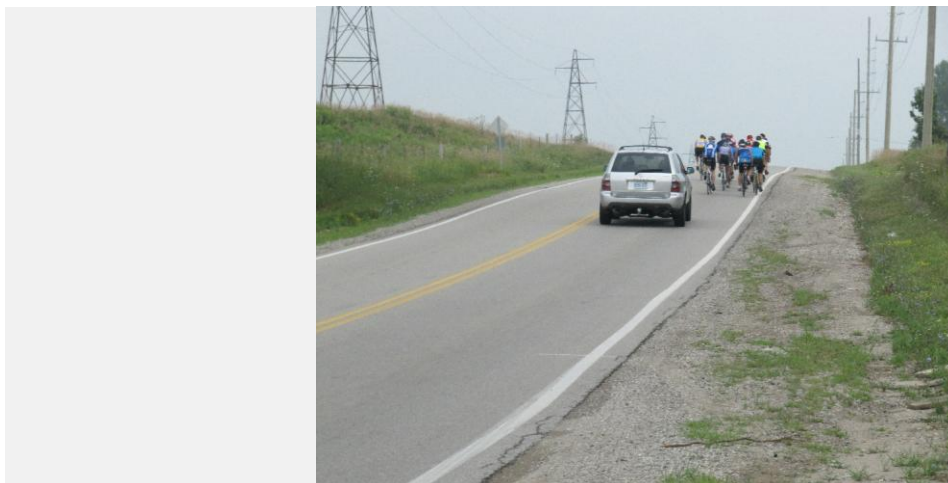
it was impossible to determine where it lay and whether there was any significant roof intrusion. A notable exchange of thoughts occurred in the Windsor Star as many commented on the fact that the deceased was not wearing a seat belt. A single person wrote "Please don't speculate, torn metal and impact can cause seat belts to be cut or fail". Well, yes, in a very, very rare set of circumstances, but more often persons can slip out of a seat-belt when a seat back is collapsed or there is excessive slack in the system, or other reasons. Few persons understand that the forces exerted in a rollover do not generate sufficient markings on seat-belts and many investigators do not understand that a seat belt may still have been worn even though an occupant is ejected. These are examples of discussion that needs to be had.

Again, the Essex County OPP released a photo on September 6, 2016 showing a pick-up truck lying upside down in a water-filled ditch and the comment was that "Injuries not serious". But this is not an insignificant event, as demonstrated on numerous occasions throughout Lambton and Kent Counties. An number of vehicles come to rest upside down in water filled ditches and some drown. Yet these dangers are rarely emphasized to the degree that they should be.

These are just some of the examples of loss-of-control events that occurred in the past week without mention of their causes. Statistics have made headlines over decades but little useful information is provided to the public to educate them about matters that could kill them.

September 3, 2016

City of London Cycling Master Plan Continues to Create Dangerous Cycling Conditions

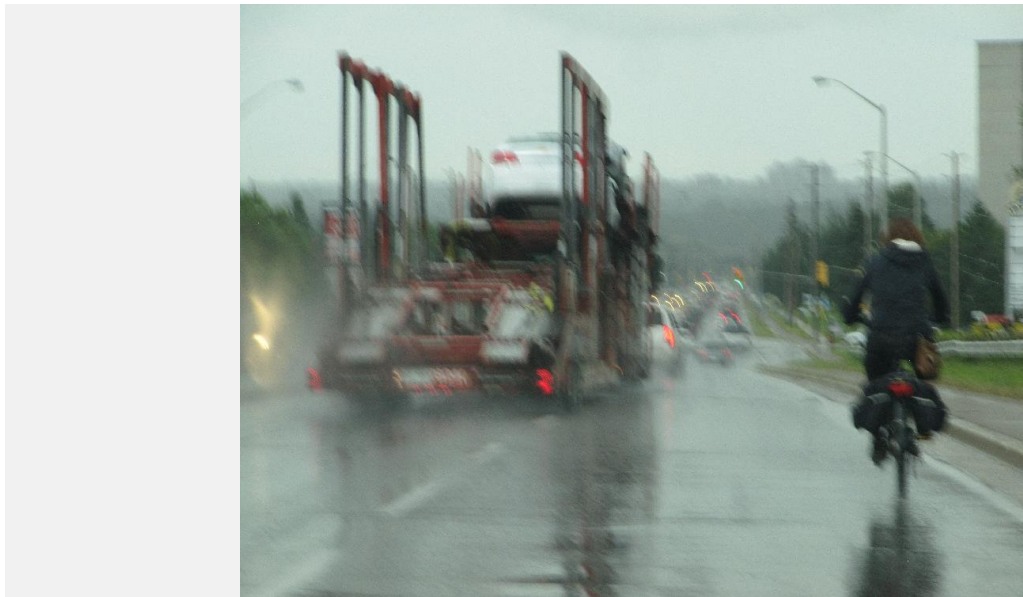


Bicycle ridership continues to occur on roadways not designed to accommodate them.

A wake-up call is needed with respect to implementation of increased bicycle ridership in Ontario. A "catching up" is occurring in recent years as many municipalities are

recognizing the need for installation of facilities to increase bicycling as a major transportation mode. The manner in which this implementation is put forth varies from one jurisdiction to another.

With respect to the City of London for example, a lack of recognition exists that many of its present roads, and those planned for the future, include the existence of both bicycles and motorized traffic moving side-by-side on roadways that were initially designed to carry only motorized traffic. The creation of painted bicycle lanes as a means to create separate lanes masks the reality that the roads are not widened from their original design and that the narrowed confines for both bicyclists and motorized vehicles will result in potential conflicts.



Newly legislated provincial laws that require that passing motor vehicles leave a 1-metre lateral gap from a passed bicyclist will cause more safety problems when "moving over" causes conflicts with opposing traffic.

New provincial legislation has enacted the requirement that a motor vehicle passing a bicyclist will require that a lateral gap of 1 metre be provided before that motion is allowed. This poorly understood requirement will not improve safety but will merely allow easier prosecution in the event of a collision. Many well-meaning drivers will follow the law religiously and drive into opposing traffic due to misjudgments in time-distance that are common human mistakes that cannot be changed.

Some jurisdictions recognize that the only truly-safe approach to bicycling transportation is the creation of separate bicycling paths that are more costly and more time-consuming to implement. Still cities like London, Ontario appear pressured to push ahead with the recognized need to increase bicycle usage seemingly regardless of whether this poses an increased risk to riders.

September 1, 2016

Unexplained Traffic Deaths in Wake of Unexplained Higher Rates of Traffic Fatalities Need Clear & More Detailed Information From Investigations



Why did an occupant of this passenger vehicle die in a simple rear-end impact. Will the facts ever be revealed?

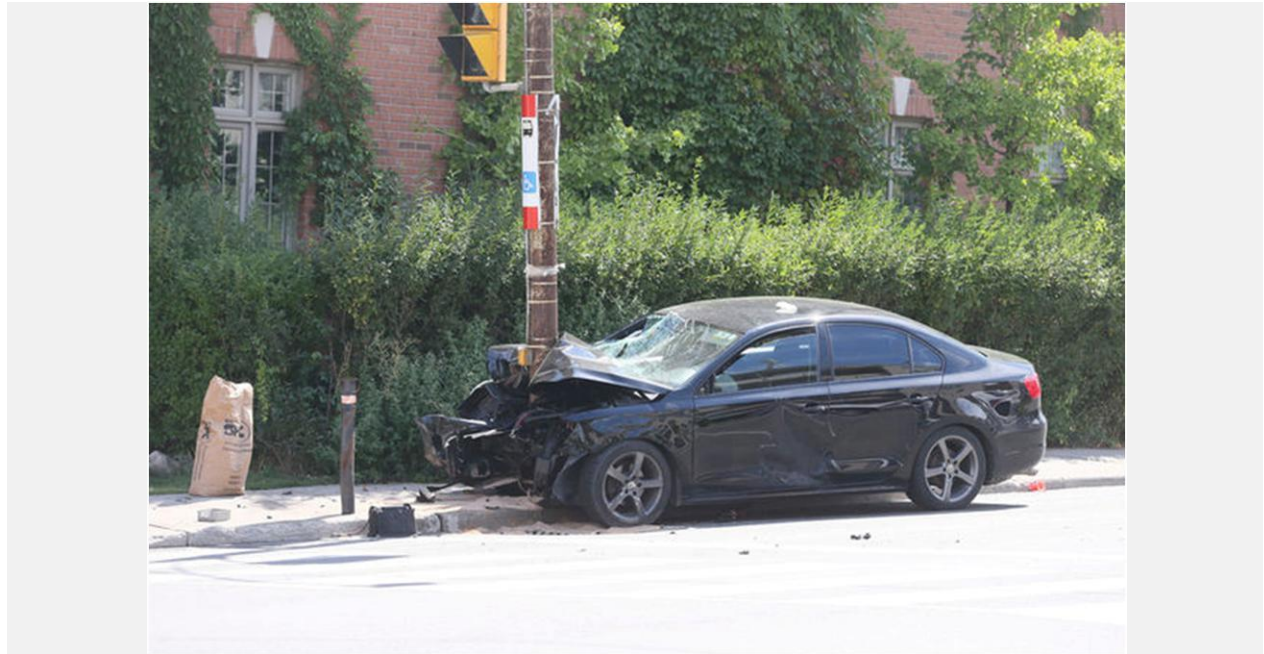
The U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) revealed a few months ago that traffic fatalities rates are inexplicably on the rise based on preliminary 2105 national data. This revelation is of greater concern as the introduction of newer vehicles with higher levels of safety are supposed to be entering into the North American vehicle fleet.

Yet, locally, there is a persistent approach of secrecy regarding how some mysterious fatalities occur and what caused those injuries. Several collisions have occurred recently where injuries and fatalities have occurred without any explanation provided either by police or the news media.

As an example, on Tuesday, August 30, 2016 a passenger car rear-ended an Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) bus and an occupant of the car died. The photo shown above is of that traffic scene and one can see that the frontal crush is of a moderate level that would be less than the crush that would occur from typical, government, 50 km/h crash tests where occupants would be expected to survive. Why did this occupant not survive? The obvious concern from anyone involved in injury assessment is that, where an under-riding collision occurs there can be a late deployment of airbag thus an occupant

can move forward and out-of-position (OOP) resulting in fatal injuries from the deployment. But would authorities purposely hide this fact from the public? Surely this action would be foolish and inappropriate as such occurrences need to be revealed.

In another instance, a late model passenger car struck a lamp post on Saturday, August 27, 2016, in Toronto as shown in the photo below.



Why did a 3-year-old child sustain life-threatening injuries in this frontal impact of a lamp post?

A 3-year-old child reportedly sustained life-threatening injuries in this crash. Such a child should have been exceptionally safe as it should have been seated in a child seat in the back of the vehicle. So what happened? Apparently no one in the public will likely ever know. Neither news media nor police would provide those answers.

In a third instance, considerable coverage was given in the news media to the sad grieving of a father and husband whose wife and child were killed in a "head-on" collision in Markham, Ontario on Monday, August 29, 2016. Understandably considerable mention was made of the two who perished and how greatly they would be missed. However, again, nothing was mentioned as to how and why both of these persons passed away. The on-site photo below shows the vehicle with substantial frontal crush but no apparent structural intrusion into the occupant space.



The vehicle shown in the middle of this vehicle was involved in a "head-on" collision. Why did its two occupants die?

Many persons unfamiliar with injury causation would not raise an eyebrow when provided with these facts. However, it is actually rather difficult to kill someone in a modern vehicle when seat-belts are used and the impact force is from the front because of the substantial engineering research gone into preventing significant injury in such impacts. When there is no intrusion into the occupant space there has to be a massive impact force to cause those injuries - unless something else was at play. So what else happened in this collision that was left unreported? Absolutely no information was provided to the public.

The above examples provide an indication of the secrecy that surrounds many fatalities that are of suspicious circumstances. The public has a right to know of events that may cause their future death so that its representatives can be directed to act in a desirable fashion that is separate from any hidden agendas of a select minority. When these events are kept secret that action is inappropriate.

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