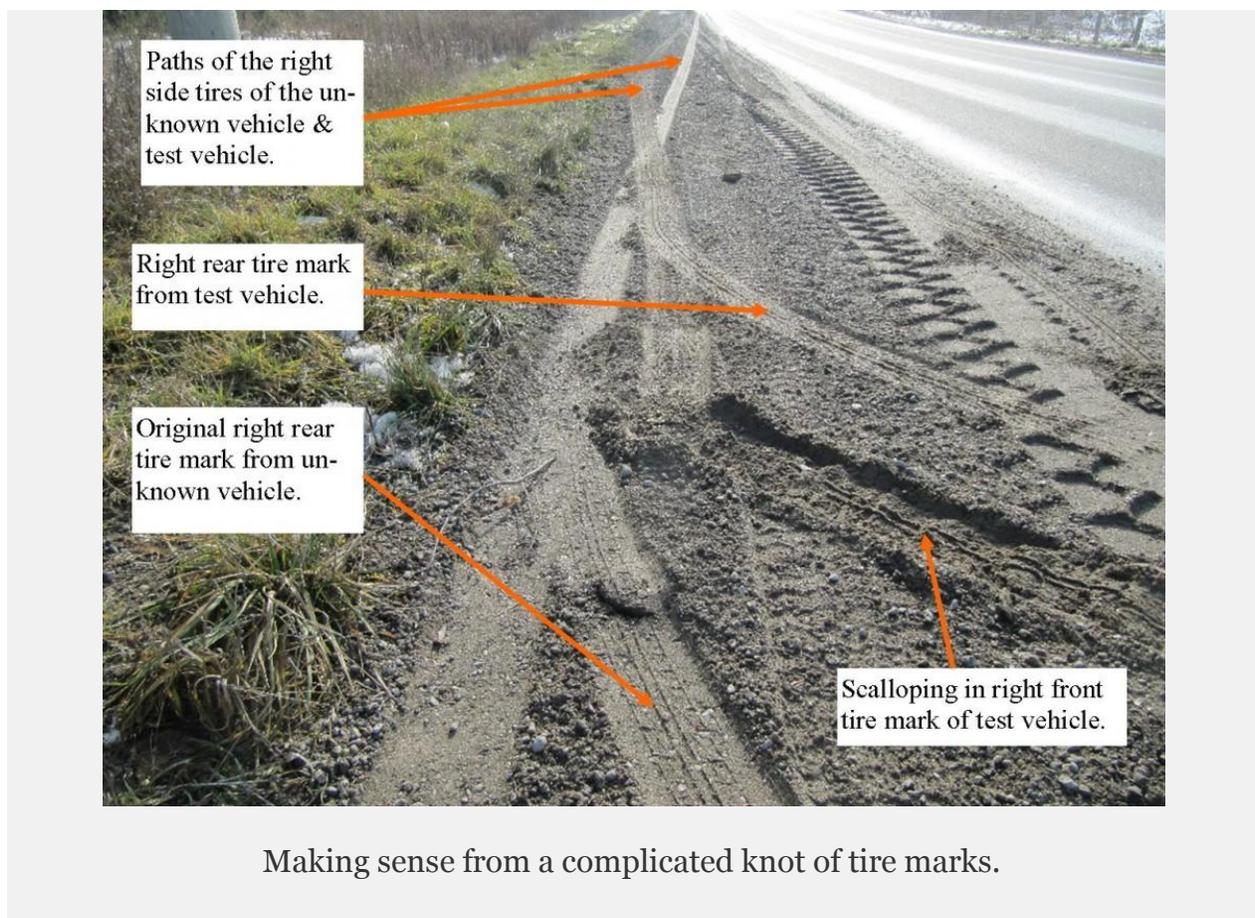


# Gorski Consulting Website

## Archived News - 2016 - February

February 29, 2016

### Characteristics of Tire Marks During Braking & Acceleration in a U-Turn on Gravel Shoulders – Part 3



In continuing our series of discussions of tire marks on gravel shoulders Gorski Consulting has now uploaded a third article discussing evidence surrounding a U-turn of an unidentified vehicle. A U-turn test was performed over the tire marks of the unknown vehicle to compare the tire marks from the

two vehicles and further discussion is made regarding the tire mark evidence. The article can be viewed on the Articles page of this website.

**February 27, 2016**

## **Doggie Puppetry – Who is Taking Who For the Walk?**



Drivers sometimes see very little of the details in the short time that they approach and pass a nearby pedestrian.

As pet owners we believe we are the masters of our domain. But our pets don't care about that. When we take our pets for a walk they have their own mission that often has nothing to do with ours.

As drivers we also approach pedestrians on roadsides whose intentions may be mysterious. In one instance a pedestrian near a curb may appear to be no threat, then suddenly that pedestrian may lurch out for illogical reasons. As drivers we are christened with the magic wand that gives us the legal "right of way" to proceed, seemingly without responsibility for our failure to drive defensively. It is not just about

cell phones but also about what we are thinking about during our drive, what conversations we have with other occupants, and the music or conversations that legally bombard our psyche through infotainment systems.

Our doggie does not understand these concepts but we have a greater capability and responsibility to do so. As pet owners who sometimes need to walk more than one pet, our focus can be taxed as the our pets become the puppeteers who pull us rather than the other way around. As drivers we fail to understand that the single pedestrian on a wintry sidewalk is not alone but could be attached by several invisible strings to small, quick-moving and unfocused creatures who like to dart illogically to illogical places. This is compounded when snow banks and small dogs are combined.

At Gorski Consulting we do not appreciate the driver's "right of way" as a legal way of closing one's eyes to all the happenings around us. Often that "right of way" is a administrative simplification of how offences can be passed through the justice system in an efficient fashion. Instead we have an obligation and responsibility to manage our two-tonne weapon in a manner that prevents vulnerable persons (and creatures) from being harmed regardless of what justifications are provided by the law.

**February 23, 2016**

## **Proposed Changes to Ontario's Truck Driver Training Cause Problems As Much As They Attempt to Solve Them**



Will a reduction in numbers of truck driver training schools lead to safer truck drivers?

An article published by the Toronto Star newspaper indicates that the Ontario government is proposing legislation that would require persons seeking a Class A license to complete training only at government approved schools. In effect, this means that regardless of how a student may perform, or what knowledge they may demonstrate at a government road test facility, they must “pre-qualify” to take the test by attending a course given by a select number of training facilities.

On a superficial basis that would make sense. The Toronto Star described the problem as follows:

*“A 2014 Star investigation into Ontario’s truck training industry found new tractor-trailer drivers could obtain their licences without taking any formal driving education. The Star’s probe revealed that many aspiring drivers enrol in courses offered at unregulated, cut-rate schools throughout the GTA that teach just the skills tested on the DriveTest exam. These schools, called “licensing mills” by trucking industry insiders, take advantage of a provincial loophole that allows them to evade regulation by charging less than \$1,000 for a course. That loophole will effectively be closed by the new rules.”*

The Toronto Star reported that “existing big-rig courses offered by government-regulated schools typically cost \$8,000”.

The question that remains unanswered is whether the \$8,000 courses are “eight times superior” in terms of creating safer truck drivers. Or does the difference in cost indicate that, in a closed market, the seller can set the price for a product without fear of competition?

It can be noted that many drivers being tested for a G license do not attend a formal driving school program as that is not mandatory. Their skills/abilities are determined when they are tested to determine whether they should receive the license. It had been previously found, through following driver histories, that those drivers who received the formal training were not any safer drivers than those drivers who did not obtain formal training. Before forcing all truck drivers into costly training it would seem logical to ask whether that training will create tangible results.

We at Gorski Consulting are strong believers in education as a means to creating safer drivers. However not all education is the same and not all educators are capable of providing the education that is needed. The most expensive courses are not necessarily the best and narrowing the driver education competition is not necessarily a successful way of creating safer drivers.

### **Additional Tragedy Is That The “How” and “Why” of Deaths In Marco Muzzo Case May Never Be Made Public**

Acknowledging the tragedy and feeling sympathy for those surrounding the deaths of four persons in the Marco Muzzo impaired driving trial are not the only important issues in his upcoming sentencing. Through his early pleading of guilt this has taken away the public’s right to know the specifics of what additional factors were involved in the tragedy. Such inquiry cannot be viewed as a search for a defense of Mr. Muzzo’s actions but history has shown that reasoned, objective analysis can be misguided when emotions are deep.

**February 21, 2016**

### **Importance of Harpooned Vehicle Is Missed In Reporting of Minor Injuries**

Yes, it is with a sigh of relief that it can be said that no serious injuries occurred when a three vehicle collision occurred at the intersection of Wharncliffe Road and Horton Street in London, Ontario at approximately 1530 hours, Saturday, February 20, 2016. But the true issue was far more serious.

CTV News in London reported about this collision on their website and provided the following photograph of one of the vehicles at its final rest position.



Photo attached with the CTV News London report of a collision at the intersection of Wharncliffe Road and Horton Street.

Note that the vehicle that had come to rest on the sidewalk also struck a metal rail barrier. One of the pieces of the metal railing has pierced the right side of the vehicle's windshield and is now seen sticking out of the hole in the glass.

Yes, we can be glad that only minor injuries occurred but a far more important issue is that the harpooning of a vehicle by a horizontal bar like this could have had devastating results had the bar gone into the interior and struck a right front occupant. Someone has to be aware of the importance of this occurrence so that a tragedy does not occur in the future.

### **Characteristics of Tire Marks During Acceleration on Gravel Shoulders – Part 2**

Continuing with our series of articles on characteristics of tire marks on roadway shoulders we have not completed the second installment dealing with evidence of acceleration in those tire marks. This article has been uploaded to the Articles page of this website where we encourage visitors to take a read.

**February 11, 2016**

## **Continued Concern with Sudden Unintended Acceleration and Drowning**

Among several hot topic issues of concern at Gorski Consulting we must again focus the public's attention to a collision event that reportedly occurred in Scarborough, Ontario on Thursday morning, February 11, 2016.

The incident reportedly involved a female driver whose vehicle travelled through a fence and was then submerged, likely in a small pond adjacent to William Kitchen Road. Luckily the driver was able to exit her vehicle before the submersion. Police were quoted (CP24 News) as saying "...the woman may have lost control of her vehicle after accidentally pressing the gas instead of the brake".

We examined the site using Google maps and noted the roadway contained a curve with a chain link fence separating the roadway from the pond. This is a dangerous set-up. Vehicle loss-of-control events typically occur at curves. A pond located so close to the road where there is a curve should contain a proper barrier to reduce the chance that vehicles could enter the water. A chain link fence is not such a proper barrier.

The female driver reportedly received only minor injuries however this incident should not be treated lightly. Once a vehicle enters water there is a good likelihood of rolling over and coming to rest on its side or upside down. In such cases the ability of the driver to exit the vehicle becomes more difficult, especially in the upside down state. We have commented on a number of occasions in the past where fatalities have occurred even when a vehicle is upside down in very shallow water. While modern vehicles come with sophisticated safety systems those will not help an occupant who cannot escape a vehicle that is even partially submerged in water. Particularly in winter conditions where hypothermia is a likely result it may not be possible to locate such a vehicle before it is too late.

Additionally, the conclusion expressed that the female driver may have lost control due to inadvertently stepping on the accelerator instead of the brake is one that must be treated with caution. As vehicles become more advanced in their electronics there is the potential for problems to exist that are not easily detectable particularly when only the

vehicle manufacturer is fully aware of how the electronics functions. Incidences of possible sudden acceleration should be documented by notifying Transport Canada, even when there is no suspicion a vehicle induced acceleration. Such notification can build a profile of vehicles that may possess a problem and may lead to an early detection before too many needless tragedies occur.

**February 10, 2016**

## **Judicial Decision on Court Transcript Costs A Partial Victory For Accessibility To Justice**

Justice Lynda Templeton struck a victory for many of the public with limited means through her comments on the cost of court transcripts as reported in a London Free Press article written by Jane Sims on February 8, 2016. The article quoted the justice as follows:

*“The issues in this case have highlighted the need for regulation and oversight by the attorney general with respect to ensuring the integrity of the administration of justice in the context of the new model of court reporting that it has decided to adopt.”*

The discussion centred around court transcripts that cost \$4,242.80.

In our view the issue of costs to be involved a court matters has become a true denial of justice for some persons of limited means who simply cannot afford those costs. This has been a matter of concern to Gorski Consulting as the costs of many police accident reports began to rise at least 15 years ago.

With respect to court transcripts Justice Templeton was quoted as saying:

*“...transcripts are too important, describing them as ‘the wall between secrecy and closed courts and a dissemination of what courts do’”.*

In our view, court transcripts should be prepared at no or minimal cost by court employees. Only this can ensure that even the most financially challenged individuals have the opportunity to defend themselves on an equal level.

We congratulate Justice Templeton for speaking on this important matter.

**February 9, 2016**

**Reporting of Madison Connecticut Bus Rollover Demonstrates A Lack of Understanding of Basic Issue of Relevance**

On Monday, February 8, 2106 a charter bus rolled onto its side on I-95 near Madison Connecticut injuring more than 30 people. There were scores of news casts on local and national television describing the incredible luck that such a horrendous crash did not lead to more serious consequences. This exemplified the lack of basic understanding of what was relevant in this crash. While there was much clamour and various video taken around the bus at its final rest position, no one thought to provide some basic photos of the important factors. None except the New Haven Register of Connecticut that we assume is a local newspaper. Fortunately this news agency published the following set of clear photos of the site.



Photo 1 of the New Haven Register (NHR) showing the charter bus lying on its side at its final rest position.

So what is so important about this photo? Well, look how absolutely horrendous this collision actually was. Let us think about high speed and what happens when a vehicle crashes into an immovable wall and what happens? Crush, major crush. So when a collision is severe and therefore life-threatening we see a lot of crush because the vehicle experienced a large force, a large change-in-velocity, and high accelerations. So we ask readers to look at the above photo and marvel at all the tremendous crush. Crush everywhere right? Where is the crush? Look at the corners of the bus, not even a dent in the corners of the bus. Yet, everyone makes incredible statements about the severity of the collision and the tremendous danger that the passengers were in. Well, yes the passengers were in danger but not for the reasons being suggested.

Injury and death can come for many reasons in motor vehicle collisions but we often say and we all should have heard it by now, if you wear your seat-belt that is a good thing because it will protect you from injury or it will reduce the severity of the injury you might otherwise sustain. But not just in severe impacts but very much so in rollover collisions. We used to see vast numbers of persons ejected and crushed by their own vehicles because those persons were spilled out of the protective cage that is the occupant compartment. Yet with seat-belts there were many more survivors.

So why mention this point here? Because rollovers are basically very benign creatures: if you stay inside of a vehicle in a rollover there is simply very little in terms of large forces that can do you much harm. Even at high speed your vehicle might tumble 100 metres but that tumbling will occur over several seconds and along many small impacts of low severity. So again, you stay inside your protective cage in a rollover and you do well, even over tumbles of 100 metres in length.

So again, what does that have to do with the present bus rollover. Well, let us look at the horrendous severity of this rollover. Surely it must have rolled for about 100 metres or more right? Well did it roll for over 100 metres? 50 metres? 10 metres? Perhaps we can look at a couple more of those photos from the New Haven Register.



Photo 2 shows the underside of the bus.



Photo 3 shows us the roadway in the vicinity of the bus.



Photo 4 takes a look along the right side of the road and the guardrail that was struck by the bus.

Well, the fact is that this bus did not roll over for any distance what-so-ever, it simply fell onto its side. So where is this tremendously severe rollover that we must be concerned about? We just finished saying that most rollovers are benign even when they occur at high speed of tumbling over 100 metres. Should we not believe that this charter bus was involved in a minor rollover collision? We want to confirm, in our opinion, this bus was clearly involved in a slow speed fall over a low guardrail. A guardrail that is meant to divert the travel direction of a much lower passenger car or light truck but not the much higher height of a charter bus.

We understand that a witness observed the bus passing by at a speed that the witness determined was excessive that therefore this might suggest we are wrong about the low speed of the rollover. That is not the case. The bus may have been travelling too quickly somewhere along the path when it was observed by the witness. However, during loss-of-control motions the bus would lose some speed. It would also lose some speed from impacting the guardrail. This would bring the speed of the bus to something much lower when the rollover occurred and this matches what we have stated.

However, the following point has been stated many times on this Gorski Consulting website. We have discussed a number of bus and heavy truck collisions in the past where the large vehicle plows through a guardrail or barrier, or is tripped by that guardrail or barrier. Large trucks and intercity buses are not compatible with the roadside infrastructure such as guardrails and barriers because the vehicles are simply too massive or the barriers are too low. In fact, in many instances a small or low barrier or guardrail increases the potential that persons will be injured because a rollover is caused. A rollover can be a benign creature but when the occupants or a vehicle are spilled out because of lack of seat belt use, or through opening of the structure, injuries can be serious and fatal. Particularly with buses, they possess weak roof structures and they are also often occupied by dozens of persons. This is a recipe for creating multiple deaths.

While we present this problem we recognize that we also have not provided a solution. The retrofitting of the roadsides of all highways in North America to make guardrails and barriers compatible with large vehicles would be extremely costly. On the other hand these changes do not have to occur this instant and a gradual change over might be a solution.

Secondly the roof structures of large buses need to be strengthened. This is a very important change that needs to be done very soon.

Thirdly, the general populace needs to be informed of the special dangers when riding on intercity buses or driving large trucks. Naturally there is a resistance to this as it could involve some economic loss to companies in the business of operating large intercity buses. However, this needs to be done for the public's protection.

### **Improvement In News Media Reporting Intersections As “Dangerous” Simply Based On Number Of Reported Collisions**

Some improvement has been observed in the manner that news media and police contribute to the public's misinformation about which intersections are the most dangerous.

Each year, a month or so after the year's end, various police agencies release the collision statistics for their region. News media then take those numbers and provide

various comments that, at times, mislead the public as to the danger of certain intersections.

Previous comments and the year when they were made are indicated below:

*“The \*\*\* Police Service released new data this week detailing the city’s top 10 most dangerous intersections”* (2012)

*“Drivers beware, the intersection at \*\*\* topped the list of \*\*\*’s worst intersections for crashes”* (2012)

*“police have released details of the worst intersections for crashes in 2013”* (2014)

The problem with such commentary is the obvious fact that the raw number of collisions is related to the traffic volume at the intersection, not necessarily because a particular intersection is more dangerous. In fact, the intersections with the most collisions likely have the highest traffic volumes and therefore are likely to receive the highest service such as road surface repair and maintenance, design enhancements, etc. Thus the intersections with the highest raw numbers of collisions might actually be safer than intersections with less numbers of collisions.

It has been noted however that some recent improvement has been made. In the latest news item published by CTV News in London the title of the article read:

***“Wellington and Exeter tops list as London’s highest-collision intersection”***

The article refrained from using the word dangerous and simply indicated what the raw numbers were. Unfortunately it still did not inform readers that the noted intersection’s topping of the list does not mean it is the most dangerous, as some readers would conclude.

**February 8, 2016**

## **Cyclist Dies Several Days After Collision – What Happens When There Is No Investigation**



Especially in winter time, cyclists are on the road not for pleasure but because of necessity. Transporting cargo while wearing heavy clothing that decreases their ability to see makes for additional safety problems. How can such special situations be identified in a collision investigation if a neutral party such as a police officer is not there to document that evidence?

A 76-year-old cyclist was reportedly involved in a collision with a motor vehicle in Richmond Hill, Ontario on January 30, 2015. The collision was not reported to police until the following day at which time “police took a report” of the incident. The man’s condition later worsened and he died in hospital on February 6, 2016. Police are now reportedly asking for any witnesses to come forward. Meanwhile the London City Police have instituted a preliminary program where they will not file a report for collisions that appear to involve minor injuries.

Examples like these illustrate the lack of service ordinary citizens can expect to receive in the coming years as neutral observation and investigation is deemed too costly in the wake of ever increasing debts by all levels of government. In the case of the fatally injured cyclist there is an obvious concern that one or the other party may be charged

with a crime or be sued in a civil suit and there may be little objective information to determine who was at fault. This does not include the additional injustice that the family of the deceased may not receive a proper explanation of how and why their family member passed away.

Every collision is unique as there are special circumstances in every case. These important circumstances will not be known when a neutral party, such as a police officer, is not there to document that important objective evidence.

### **Motherisk And Charles Smith – Lightning Rods For A Flawed Judicial System**

When wanting to deflect from being struck by lightning a clever person erects a lightning rod.

A CBC News article of February 8, 2016 raised the issue of flawed expert testimony using the cases of the Toronto Sickkids Motherisk Laboratory and former pathologist Charles Smith as examples of the problems with a minority of so called “experts” in the medical field who have suspect qualifications. The conclusion that is drawn is that expert testimony is false because experts misrepresent their qualifications and use their associations with large institutions such as Toronto Sickkids Hospital to make their opinions appear more credible than they are.

Gorski Consulting has worked in the field of providing expert opinion in the area of motor vehicle accident reconstruction since 1995 and Zygmunt Gorski, the principal of the firm, was involved in such work through his previous employments before 1995. Criticisms of experts and their work has always been in existence as persons working primarily for the defense attack experts working primarily for plaintiffs, plaintiff experts attack defense experts, experts for the prosecution attack criminal defense experts and criminal defense experts attack prosecution experts. However, that is not the end of the story. News media, lawyers and even judges are also in the business of attacking various sides and individuals for their various reasons. Some of those attacks are genuinely credible, unfortunately however, many are not. Many attacks are generated by personal grudges and attempts to represent oneself as the sole fountain of wisdom and right. Many attacks are given credence not because they are justified but because the attacker also has an air of authority and expertise who cannot be questioned. Those who project

successful attacks are helped if they have a long list of qualifications, are associated with large institutions and have worked to place an number of important titles before and after their names.

The bottom line is that Ontario's judicial system is not only imperfect but far from a model that should be followed by others. We are not aware of the specifics of the Motherisk or Charles Smith cases but they play well in the news media as unusual and rare incidents that do not exemplify the general judicial society. We respectfully disagree. Whatever the merits of branding these as examples of unethical behaviour, there are many skeletons in Ontario's judicial closet that are not being addressed. In our experience almost every individual involved in the judicial process needs to look in their own mirror and be uncomfortable with what they see. While the Motherisk and Charles Smith may be distasteful so are the actions of so many who pretend to be above it all. A system that allows expert testimony from individuals who are already aligned with one side or another is doomed to create the unethical behaviour that is mentioned, not only as a fault of those specific entities mentioned but as a fault of all those who allow such a system to exist without stepping up to the plate and demanding something better. By pretending that the fault lies with just a few outliers we erect a lightning rod to deflect attention from our own actions, in-actions and from the system as a whole. In the 21st Century, as we are capable of achieving marvelous technological advances, yet we still live in the dark ages of judicial process where a loud voice matters more than objective scientific evidence, where we still need to burn witches at the stake, and where the opinions of those with gold medians and honorary degrees matter more than whether a point is understood and makes logical sense.

### **When Circumstances of a Death Are Questionable, Someone Should at Least Ask Some Basic Questions**

While the latest news item of a double snowmobile fatality collision near Sudbury, Ontario does not particularly stand out from the general reporting, it can be seen as an example of the way in which mysterious fatalities are passed on without questioning, as a normal way of life.



Snowmobilers, much like motorcyclists, are not well protected from impacts with many objects in their environment. However, in some instances of fatal injuries further study and information is needed to provide an acceptable explanation of the result.

A report by CP24 News of Toronto indicated that two persons were killed and a one-year-old child was injured after a snowmobile driven by a 42-year-old man struck a female pedestrian near some fishing huts. Both the male snowmobile rider and the female pedestrian were pronounced dead.

Although the article written by “The Canadian Press” was published on Sunday, February 7, 2016 there was no mention as to when this collision occurred. Other agencies such as the local Sudbury newspaper provided that information but that is not the point of this discussion. Very basic information is missing from this news report.

Secondly, the only impact that was reported was with respect to the female pedestrian and the male and his snowmobile. A collision involving a snowmobile that would normally be severe enough to cause fatal injuries to a pedestrian should involve a substantial forward speed of the snowmobile. Typically such snowmobiles contain a frontal fairing and a snowmobile rider normally wears a helmet, and is seated in a protective, squatted position behind the protection of the front of the machine. Such facts typically provide a snowmobile rider sufficient protection from an impact with the body of a female pedestrian whose mass might be in the range of 150 lbs or less. Thus,

while fatal injuries to a pedestrian might be understandable, fatal injuries to the rider in such a typical impact are not understandable.

There are likely extenuating circumstances in this incident that have likely not been reported. However such is the concern with any death which is reported in a fashion that raises questions about how it could occur. If there was an incident, for example, of a bystander being apprehended by authorities and then found deceased under questionable circumstances there should be questions asked. Thus it should never be the case that we question one questionable death but not another because of the surroundings of the case. This is not to say that our society should be paranoid and suspicious of every reported event, but when obvious questions are likely to arise, sufficient reporting should exist to extinguish those obvious questions.

**UPDATE: February 10, 2016; 1020 Hours**

In an article published by the Sudbury Star newspaper the mystery behind the death of two individuals in a snowmobiling collision may have been clarified. The article indicated the female pedestrian may have been holding a radar gun just before the collision and this could indicate that some form of speed testing might have been taking place. Under such conditions it could be that the snowmobile might be travelling much faster than typical, therefore the rider's injuries may be explainable. It is this sort of clarification that is often needed and not available in many reports of motor vehicle death and injury.

February 7, 2016

## Comparison of ET-Plus Terminal Damage in a Real-Life Impact Versus the Results of Controlled Testing



A compliance test of an ET-Plus terminal causes the rail to pierce the driver's door of a test vehicle. This questionable result is compared to the damage of these terminals found in real-life impacts.

In a continuing effort to provide information regarding the safety of roadside barriers such as the ET-Plus terminal, Gorski Consulting has prepared an article focusing on the impact damage of an ET-Plus terminal located on Highway 401 west of Highbury Avenue in London, Ontario. The article is accompanied with photos the pre-impact condition of the terminal from a previous survey. We also provide a discussion of the compliance testing that was performed on the terminals in the late 2014 and early 2015. This article is now available for viewing on the Articles page of this website.

February 5, 2016

## U.S. NHTSA Website Announces “Steep Increase” In Roadway Deaths for 2015 – Canadians Will Have To Wait Years To Know Our Status



A Pick-up truck slides into a lamp standard in London, Ontario while a snow plow loaded with salt is on its destination to clear our Canadian roads. Has the Canadian traffic situation suddenly become worse in 2015?

Why are numbers of roadway fatalities suddenly increasing in the U.S.? The U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has announced that, based on the first 9 months of 2015 data, deaths have increased to 26,000 from 23,796 in 2014. That is a very large increase of 9.3 percent!

That increase may not sound like much but the facts confirm that road fatalities have been dropping steadily since the mid-1970s when fatality numbers reached their

maximums near 50,000. So why the sudden change, especially when there should be more newer vehicles on the road with many advanced safety features?

The NHTSA has some vague suggestions. They indicate that human factors “contribute” to 94%. The public reads this as 94% of crashes are “caused” by drivers. No doubt as the NHTSA also states that its focus on reducing these numbers will be to focus on “persistent issues like drunk driving and failure to wear seat belts”.

But wait a minute, does the word “persistent” mean that those problems existed before the rise in fatalities of 2015? Have drivers and passengers suddenly started to drink more and remove their seat-belts in 2015?

The NHTSA had an opportunity to claim that the rise in fatalities is due to other human activities such as the use of cell phones, but they did not. Why is that so? Surely there has been much publicity surrounding the dangers of cell phone use and we hear that discussion from everyone wherever we turn. So why has the NHTSA not pointedly emphasized that fact? We may never know.

As for the Canadian experience, we may find out in 3 to 4 years when Transport Canada makes its statistics for 2015 public. Why is it that something that may kill hundreds more Canadians on the road is not quite the same as killing hundreds of Canadians from a drug reaction? If hundreds of Canadians died from taking Tylenol pills would we wait 3 to 4 years to announce it? Is it that Canadians simply count slower?

## **News Items Through To November 2015 Are Moved To Archived News Webpage**

As readers may have already noticed, we have uploaded the monthly news items from this News webpage to the Archived News webpage. We will be removing these months from this News page shortly. As always, if readers are interested in past news items it is a simple process to visit the Archived News page and click on the month/year of interest.

**February 4, 2016**

**Life-threatening Head-On Collision in St Thomas Ontario Suggests Impact Is In Unusual Location of Highway**



This photograph released by the OPP shows two vehicles at their final rest positions on Highway 3 just west of First Street in St Thomas, Ontario. The physical evidence suggests the vehicles likely collided in the eastbound exit lane and that is unusual given the reported information.

It is reported that at approximately 0730 hours this morning, February 4, 2016, a serious head-on collision occurred on Highway 3 just west of First Street in St Thomas, Ontario. The official explanation is that the white Chevrolet car shown in the above photo was westbound, or travelling towards the camera. The Chevrolet was following a westbound tractor-trailer when the Chevrolet driver attempted to pass the truck. During this passing motion the white Chevrolet struck the eastbound Mazda that is seen straddling the south ditch. The problem with this scene is that the debris field suggests that the impact likely occurred just in front of the front end of the Chevrolet at its

resting place shown in the above photo. This is unusual because, considering the typical passing motion, the Chevrolet should have been in the eastbound lane of Highway 3 and not in the eastbound ramp lane that exits onto First Street.

As this discussion is only a scant 3 to 4 hours after the event further details may explain these unusual facts.

UPDATE: February 4, 2016; 1755 Hours

We have now had a chance to examine the collision site which included a distant view of the vehicles while they were still at their rest positions. This has led to a change in our understanding of the events. It appears that the white vehicle was the Mazda while the dark vehicle was the Chevrolet. Why we stated the opposite is because we were unable to identify the damaged vehicles at our initial view of their damaged state. However, once we were on the site we were able to take a closer look of the vehicles as they were being removed from the site and this confirms the new information.

The other reason why we mis-identified the vehicles is because, in a very large percentage of cases, a head-on collision involves the left portions of the front ends, and this results in counter-clockwise rotation of the vehicles to their final rest positions. It is a rare instance where the offset is to the right of the centre-of-gravity with clockwise rotation because such a scenario would indicate a great misjudgment by one or both drivers. The present collision was one of those rare ones where the offset was to the right and that is why it did not follow the expected, typical situation.

The photo below shows the status of the site while we awaited the opening of the road and completion of the police investigation.



View, looking east, along Highway 3 showing the vehicles at their final rest positions while the police continue their investigation.

Even with the correction to the proper vehicles, there still remains the mystery of the area of impact that we referred to in the opening of this news item. Why does it appear that the impact occurred in the eastbound ramp lane?

There are those who would say the answer is simple and obvious: The driver of the Chevrolet steered into the ramp lane in an attempt to avoid the impending impact. But that explanation is not that simple. After the police completed their investigation we examined the site thoroughly. There was no evidence of any pre-crash tire marks from any vehicles. This is an important observation.

In the very short time that is available for drivers to attempt to avoid a head-on collision, if a driver is able to initiate a braking or steering action then this action has to be very quick and of extreme magnitude. Thus, if we use a steering input as an example, if a driver is to achieve any meaningful effect on the vehicle the steering wheel must be

turned very quickly and with very much rotation. When a driver performs such an action pre-impact tire marks will be generated and those will be visible (in most cases). However, as we stated earlier, there were no pre-impact tire marks. So the original “simple” explanation is not an explanation of what happened.

Now, here is a twist. The closest weather data we could obtain for 0730 hours this morning was from the London Airport which is a fair distance away. However that data indicated that the temperature was -0.8 at 0700 hours and -1.2 degrees Celsius at 0800 hours. Also the wind was from the west at 16 km/h at 0700 hours and from the west-north-west at 22 km/h at 0800 hours. Thus the wind chill was -6 at 0700 hours and -7 at 0800 hours. Is it possible that the road surface was Highway 3 was slippery at the time of this collision and the Chevrolet did not try to pass the tractor-trailer but simply slipped to the out side of the curve? This would explain the lack of any visible tire marks, either prior to impact or after impact by any of the vehicles including the mysterious tractor trailer. We know that when a road surface is covered in a thin layer of ice or very cold dampness that no visible tire marks will be produced.

The official explanation that the Chevrolet driver attempted to pass a tractor-trailer and this is why to collision occurred does not make sense. Looking at the above site photos it can be seen that, on the westbound approach to the accident site there is a right curve and and a double solid centre-line. Why would a 65-year-old female driver attempt to pass a long trailer-trailer when her line of sight would obviously be extremely limited because of the long and wide truck ahead of her and the right curve that would limit her vision even further? It might make more sense if the trailer-trailer was entering Highway 3 from the First Street entrance ramp and if there was some conflict with respect to who had priority into the westbound lane of Highway 3. But that is not what was communicated in the news media.

Furthermore, there is a lack of any evidence of emergency reaction at the site by the tractor-trailer driver. There are no tire marks of any sort on the paved road surface and one would have to wonder why if indeed there was some interference taking place between the two westbound vehicles.

As typical, the communication between police and official news media do not provide the public with a proper explanation for this collision occurred.

**February 2, 2016**

## **Characteristics of Tire Marks During Acceleration on Gravel Shoulders – Part 1**

One of the least known parts of evidence related to motor vehicle collision reconstruction is that of tire marks on gravel shoulders. While many collision reconstruction schools spend large portions of their curriculum on determining speed, there is not a single such school that provides students with any instruction with respect to the characteristics of tire marks on gravel shoulders. There is a mistaken belief that there is little or nothing of substance that can be gained in the reconstruction process from such education. Yet, as most significant and fatal collisions occur on rural roadways vehicles frequently leave tire marks on gravel shoulders. In many instances a proper interpretation of the meaning of these tire marks can be an additional useful tool in the reconstructionist's tool box. As a result, Gorski Consulting is embarking on an ambitious project of developing a series of articles discussing the characteristics of tire marks on gravel shoulders. The first in this series will discuss evidence of acceleration and this article has been uploaded to the Articles page of this website. We invite readers to check out this latest offering.

**Gorski Consulting**  
**London, Ontario, Canada**

*Copyright © Gorski Consulting,  
All rights reserved*