

Gorski Consulting Website

Archived News - 2017 - March

March 16, 2017

Barrier Impact By Bus Causes Rollover on Highway 401 in Toronto, Ontario



View looking east toward the westbound collector lanes of Highway 401 just east of Allen Road where a bus struck a barrier and rolled over on the morning of March 16, 2017.

A major tragedy is just around the next corner as we fail to consider bus and heavy vehicle safety in impacts of roadside barriers.

Official news media have reported that on the morning of March 16, 2017 a westbound bus struck a barrier and rolled over in the westbound collector lanes of Highway 401 just east of Allen Road in Toronto, Ontario.

Fortunately the bus was empty except for its driver however that driver was reportedly ejected and sustained major injuries.

The extent of the misinformation about the incident can be noted from the police description of what happened. Constable Ian Michael was quoted as saying “He lost control of the bus and hit the jersey barrier and flipped onto the side”. Well, there is a “New Jersey” concrete barrier but from the typically poor media videos of the point of impact it would appear that the bus did not strike the concrete New Jersey barrier. It struck an energy attenuation device in front of the end of the barrier. Such an energy dissipation device is installed to prevent or reduce the severity of an impact should a vehicle collide with the non-yielding and stiff concrete end of the New Jersey barrier.

The question that no one has asked is whether the energy attenuation device was the correct one for the site and whether it functioned in an appropriate manner. In other words, is the rollover of the bus inevitable and is this the best that can be done? We doubt it.

If the bus had been loaded with passengers the rollover could very well have resulted in multiple fatalities as has been demonstrated in many previous incidents that have been documented on this Gorski Consulting website. All authorities and news media are to blame if they continue to ignore this discussion and fail to inform the public of this important issue.

A Google Maps view of the site suggests that the struck energy attenuation device was the one shown in the two figures shown below.



View of unusual energy attenuation device installed at the end of the New Jersey barrier which was likely struck by the bus and caused the rollover.



Side view of the energy attenuation device. A change in the shade of the concrete suggests it had been damaged in a previous incident.

As noted above, the device seems somewhat unusual and not typical of what is seen. So was it some kind of homemade installation or was it actually tested, like it is required, before it was installed on the major highway? We do not know. But who will ask this important question of the Ontario Ministry of Transportation? It is highly unlikely that police will do that even though they must be a party to the protection of drivers on our roads. It is also unlikely that the official news media will do it as the numbers of professional journalists continues to dwindle and the resources available to uncover these important issues become less with each passing year.

Incidents like this present us with an opportunity to enter into a discussion so that action can be taken to prevent a potential major tragedy in the near future. We at Gorski Consulting are a small voice that continues to sound the alarm but certainly it is the responsibility of others to take notice and also take action.

March 13, 2017

Determination to Prevent Future Collision Fires Must Overcome Our Grief Over Present Ones

It is with concern that we learned today from a London Free Press newspaper article that a young man, Nick Dyer, was killed as a result of a collision on February 13, 2017 in Amherstburg, Ontario. From the contents of the article we observed that this young man was popular and greatly missed by those who had contact with him.

We follow the news reports of recent collisions on a regular basis and do not fully understand how we failed to miss this occurrence in the short days after its happening. As we have been particularly concerned with the occurrence of fires in motor vehicle collisions we were surprised with the revelation in the newspaper article that “three other occupants managed to escape the vehicle with minor injuries before it caught fire”. Without direct reference, the article implied that Nick Dyer did not escape the fire.

Why were we not made aware that perhaps a fire may have contributed to Nick Dyer’s death? Granted, we have not followed the Windsor Star newspaper believing that fatal collisions would be important enough that they would be reported by other news organizations such as CTV News which operates throughout Ontario and possibly has an office in the Windsor area. That appears not to have been the case.

What is disturbing about so many similar instances is the degree to which the tragic circumstances of fire appear to be withheld from public knowledge. We hear the reasoning mentioned and we read of the reasoning behind it. The logic is that we must protect the privacy and consider the feelings of the family and friends by not revealing in public the details of what occurred. This is a noble reason and we understand and sympathize with it. However, there are other issues at play here.

We must understand that the occurrence of fires in motor vehicle collisions should not be accepted as inevitable and routine. Numerous international, motor-vehicle, safety standards have been enacted since the 1960s which have become tremendously successful in preventing death and reducing the severity of injuries in motor vehicle collisions. Those successes were generated through scientific study of the results of real-life collisions. They were generated by well-meaning researchers who got down to the bottom of what transpired regardless of the complications. One of those standards governs the incidence of fires and requires that motor vehicles be resistant to such an occurrence even in high severity impacts. If a vehicle catches fire in a collision it may be deemed defective, no less than if the steering wheel failed to re-direct a vehicle from a crash or if a braking system failed to function. These are deemed “safety-related defects” because they can be dangerous to the safety of any vehicle occupant. When we do not take notice of these defects it should be abundantly clear that we may be contributing to the death and severe injury of any innocent road user of the future.

While death in a motor vehicle collision is difficult those responsible for their documentation must also rise above the sorrow and sympathy and understand that we have a responsibility to prevent similar deaths that will occur in the future. Many similar fires have occurred in many previous years before Nick Dyer passed away. After the occurrence of each of those fires we had an opportunity and obligation to study how they occurred and to make corrections that might have led to the prevention of Nick’s death. After Nick’s death we have an opportunity and obligation to determine how and why he passed away so that we can prevent the next Nick of the future from suffering the same fate.

Whether the opportunity was taken and whether the obligation was met cannot be left to some wishful hope, it must be seen to have been done. Was Transport Canada notified of this incident so that it could be logged and tracked? Who determined how the fire started and what qualifications did that investigator have to conclude whether this

occurrence was reasonable? Keeping this information secret to the knowledge of the select few is a recipe for disaster. At Gorski Consulting we continue to bang this small drum wherever we can.

March 11, 2017

Spying on Driving Habits is Wrong When Drivers Misinformed

An innocuous-sounding project (“MyCarma”) has been announced by the London Free Press with respect to a reported City of London research project whereby public drivers are given a free data logger to plug into the diagnostic link connector (DLC) of their vehicle thus allowing the tracking of the “driving habits” of that driver. Described as an inquiry to inform drivers of their wasting of energy when involved in high accelerations the program says little about how the collected data will be used, by whom, and what guarantees the public has that the data will not be manipulated to extract more than what is claimed.

Randy Richmond, the author of the London Free Press article described some disturbing actions performed by the City’s representative for the project, Jamie Skimming, “air quality manager”. Mr. Richmond wrote: “Speaking of experiments, here’s a fun one Skimming did that others may want to try. The possibilities of educating others are endless: ‘I put it in my wife’s car and I didn’t tell her, Skimming says. She scored well’.”

Mr. Richmond and Mr. Skimming both fail to understand the importance of personal privacy. It should be common sense to anyone that you do not attach a recording device of such capability to their vehicle without a person’s knowledge or permission. Mr. Richmond’s suggestion that this is something that “...others may want to try” is bad advice that he should have reconsidered before putting to print. In our society’s growing ability to become “Peeping Toms” supported by ever-more-powerful technology it is dependent on each of us to act to ensure that we respect the right of others’ privacy. No laws can be enacted to guarantee that this will happen. It must be an understanding that we “Do unto others what we would have done to us”.

As for the MyCarma program we would advise the public not to become involved in this or any similar programs unless they are absolutely sure that the data

will be used only in the manner it has been described and that the persons providing those comments are trustworthy.

March 7, 2017

Ahmed Darwish Travelling on Gravel Shoulder at 214 km/h Does Not Make Sense

Gorski Consulting is not in business of defending impaired drivers without cause. The reported death of a young mother, Susana Dumitru, and severe injuries to her infant child are tragic. However we also believe that guilt should be based on objective fact.

Scattered accounts coming from news media about the trial of Ahmed Darwish who was the alleged impaired driver whose Mercedes rear-ended the Dumitru vehicle lead us to question the accuracy of the evidence. As an example, the Mercedes was reported to be “driving on the gravel shoulder” while the speed of the vehicle before impact was 214 km/h at impact. It would take a considerably gifted race car driver to maintain control of a vehicle while travelling at such an incredible speed while travelling onto a gravel shoulder.

Additionally, no photographs were ever revealed showing the damage to the Dumitru vehicle until yesterday, when dark images of a damaged vehicle were shown possibly stopped in the median of Highway 7. Reporters are used to hiding the damage to vehicles so what was visible may be an inaccurate depiction of the extent of damage. However what was shown was some fairly moderate damage to the left rear of a vehicle. What was visible should not result in a tremendously severe impact. Thus if the Mercedes was truly travelling at 214 km/h it should have travelled an extremely long distance after this impact before coming to rest because it should have possessed an very large amount of kinetic energy that would have to be dissipated.

While the data imaged from event data recorders (EDR) may be reliably precise it may not always accurately report what we interpret it to be. Thus a vehicle “speed” from an EDR may only indicate the speed of the rotation of the vehicle’s wheels and not the ground speed of a vehicle. Regardless, any reporting of such data has to be compared to the physical evidence to confirm that it makes sense. This is the job of a collision reconstructionist. Whether that was done in this case is unknown. However the few bits

and pieces of evidence emerging from the trial are confusing and does not leave one with comfort that all was done as it should be.

UPDATE: March 9, 2017, 0900 Hours

Further information from other news media indicates that the struck Mazda in which Susana Dumitru was travelling rolled several times, ejecting her. That is crucial information from an injury-causation standpoint. When seat-belts are worn it is difficult and rare to eject an occupant from a vehicle. Presuming that a seat-belt was worn questions should be asked as to how this ejection could have occurred. Again, these are important questions that need to be answered to protect occupants in future collisions and if a defect in the restraint system or something else exists with the Mazda 3 then it should be exposed.

Other information from news media indicated that the Mercedes was “tailgating another car and swerving between the two westbound lane” before the Mercedes “blew past another driver, an off-duty Waterloo Regional Police sergeant”. The information that tail-gating occurred must mean that at this point the Mercedes has to be travelling at a similar speed to the vehicle it was tailgating and that speed would have to be much lower than the 214 km/h that was reported as its speed at impact. So what would cause an impaired driver to suddenly accelerate to a speed which is at the maximum capability of the vehicle in a relatively short time? The problem that is sometimes observed with event data recorders (“black boxes”) is that, when a maximum reading like this exists, it is sometimes just a “place holder” indicating the existence of an invalid or erroneous condition with the data. Thus it is important to review the physical evidence and confirm that this was not the case.

To many this discussion may be a series of moot points. An apparent impaired driver caused a most horrendous result and should be punished accordingly. The difficult role of objective investigators is to set aside the anger and want of vengeance, regardless of who a person is or what the consequences may be, and examine the evidence at its face value. For many professionals, even members of the justice system and the courts, this is a difficult function to perform. However the reason why this is done is because it is equally tragic to convict an innocent person of a crime simply because we feel someone must be made to pay for a terrible consequence. This is not meant to reflect on the

situation in the current case but it is a reminder of how the justice system ought to function.

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