

Fatal Loss-of-Control Collision on Oxford County Road 6 North of Brooksdale

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It seems Brooksdale, Ontario has become a hot bed of fatal collisions recently. I had visited the area on October 27th, with the intention of examining a reported rollover collision that occurred on October 16th. I began reporting on the facts I uncovered and indicated that the collision was not a rollover but in fact was an impact with a tree. It seems the site I examined was in fact the site of a second fatal collision that had occurred on Tuesday evening, October 26th. It is a strange coincidence that two fatal collisions should occur in this area over such a short space of time. In this second collision it is being reported that a northbound vehicle was passing another at approximately 1830 hours when the passing vehicle slid sideways, off the road and struck the tree. Michael Stearns, 28, of London has since passed away as a result of this impact.

So I have now changed my introduction to this article but I will still review the evidence as I found it. As usual I will show you some photos of the accident site and provide you some of my commentary and opinions.

Now, let's look at the accident site from a distance. The tree impact where the vehicle came to rest was about 700 metres north of the intersection with Oxford County Road #92. In this area County Road #6 takes some considerable hills and valleys. The photo below is a northbound view of the roadway just north of the County Road 92 intersection and you are seeing the last hill/valley before the tree impact.



The maximum speed sign that you see on the right side of the road is the beginning of that speed while behind the camera the speed limit was 60 km/h because of some limited visibility due to a steep downgrade and the noted intersection. So basically the vehicle should have been travelling relatively slowly as it passed the intersection and then as it approached the location of the above photo its speed should have increased. If the vehicle went out of control while passing another vehicle then it would appear that this happened near the beginning of the increased speed zone.

Next, I am going to show you a similar view to the one I just showed you but this time it is closer to the right, or east side of the road, but still looking northward. The black vehicle that you see parked in the distance on the right shoulder is my vehicle and it is adjacent to the tree that was eventually struck by the vehicle.



The above view is somewhat distorted because it is zoomed in so that you can appreciate the contours of the road and the position of my parked vehicle. The distance from the camera to the parked vehicle is still several hundred metres but what I'm trying

to demonstrate is that there is a downslope as the driver lost directional control somewhere in this area.

Next, if you are at all a reconstructionist or someone familiar with loss-of-control collisions you will want to know what is on the shoulders of the road because very often we see loss-of-control tire marks in the gravel. Well, I did not notice any tire marks on either shoulder of the road. But just to appease the curious viewer, here is a view of the west shoulder.



And here is a view of the east shoulder.



There was no evidence on the road surface and the first sign of any tire marks was at the east gravel shoulder after the vehicle was already in an advanced stage of rotation. Here is a view of the road near the beginning of the tire marks on the east shoulder.



Now it should be fairly evident in the above photo exactly where the loss-of-control tire marks reside on the shoulder and the lack of tire mark evidence on the road. I have no doubt that if I had arrived at the collision scene within a short time after the collision, in the role of an investigating police officer, I would have found additional tire marks on the pavement and likely other marks perhaps on one of the shoulders. Of course the critical factor is rain and wetness. If the road surface was wet then the chance of finding a tire mark on the surface, even minutes after the crash, drop dramatically. Certainly I would

not expect to see any long lasting tire marks on a wet pavement. But let's get back to the evidence.

Now, below, I will show you the tire marks as they come off the pavement and onto the east shoulder.



It is not surprising that we would find the typical evidence of tire marks that are converging and diverging. And the tire marks appear fairly straight. This is an indication

of high speed. If you are uncertain then go back and take a look at the photos of the tire marks I showed in the recent article of the fatal collision that occurred on Kent Bridge Road. The tire marks in that case were swarming all over the road, in a lateral sense, because the vehicle was travelling relatively slow (so far as loss-of-control collisions are concerned). The tire marks in the present case are so straight because the vehicle is travelling so quickly and it cannot change its lateral position very much in the visible distance because it is travelling through that distance in very little time. Let's move on.

Now let's look at the tire marks as they move through the east roadside and toward the tree, as shown in the photo below.



And below you will see the evidence of impact with the tree.



This was a fairly violent impact so far as impacts with trees are concerned and this is evidenced by the amount of bark and wood that has been removed from the trunk. One can study these events further by placing a tape measure vertically along the trunk and examining what evidence exists from the base to the highest point. The photo below shows the tape measure that I placed against the noted tree.



By noting what is visible and then comparing the evidence to similar events you can gain a better understanding of such events.

It is worthwhile to note that evidence from such an impact can become thrown a long distance past the point where the vehicle came to rest. Below is an example of some tempered glass that was found lying in the field past the tree impact.



Normally such tempered glass is broken into much finer crystals thus finding such larger pieces might indicate that the glass was shattered due to the contact occurring at a more distant location of the vehicle.