

Fatal Loss-of-Control Collision on Gideon Drive Is A Testimony For Seat Belt Use

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Just yesterday I prepared an article on the loss-of-control collision of an Elgin County OPP police cruiser where the vehicle was obviously travelling at tremendous speed, yet the Constable survived. Unfortunately these events are a toss of the dice in that you can never predict the outcome. Such is true of the subject of this article whereby a driver of a pick-up truck sustained fatal injuries as a result of a loss-of-control collision on Gideon Drive, on the western outskirts of London, Ontario on July 7th, 2010. I examined the site today and have the following photos to share.

First, the London Free Press reported the following:

" A Southwold man was killed in a single vehicle crash on Gideon Dr. Wednesday night (July 7th). Middlesex OPP said Vaughan Ireland, 37, was the driver and sole occupant of a Ford Pick-up truck that was headed westbound on Gideon when it left the road and rolled into the south side ditch. Police said Ireland was not wearing a seatbelt and was partially ejected from the truck in the crash. He as taken by ambulance to London Health Sciences Centre University Campus where he later died. Gideon Drive between Woodhull Road and Brigham Drive was closed until 3:00 a.m. Thursday."

First, here is a photo of the accident site, looking west, taken from several hundred metres east of the final rest position (FRP) of the vehicle.



The Pick-up truck travelled off the road surface just behind my car which is parked on the south shoulder of the road. What is not apparent is that just behind the camera is a curve in the road such that the Pick-up truck would have travelled perhaps 300 to 400 metres past the curve before it finally left the road.

Below is another westward view but showing the tire marks on the north shoulder where the Pick-up truck travelled before crossing the road toward its eventual rollover on the south roadside.



The presence of such tire marks is fairly routine as this is the most common manner in which vehicles begin their loss of control.

What is unusual is that at this point the Pick-up truck is not travelling very quickly. This can be observed by noting the angle of the "yaw" marks as they cross the road. When a vehicle is travelling very quickly it cannot change its travel direction "very much" in a short distance. This means that tire marks are generally more parallel to the road length as opposed to being at a considerably angle to the length of the road. Certainly one could take a chord and middle ordinate of the yaw mark and make a calculation which would demonstrate this but that is not always needed. Simply looking at the angle of the tire marks to the length of the road can provide an experienced investigator with a clue as to the vehicle's general speed. Besides that, you will also note in the following photos that, once the vehicle began its rollover it did not travel very far to its final rest position - another sign of the vehicle's speed.

So the photo below shows the tire marks as they cross the roadway and head toward the south roadside.



You can see from the tire marks that the Pick-up truck is upright and leading with its right side as it heads off the road. The tire marks end abruptly as the vehicle encounters a small elevation change just before the vehicle enters onto the soccer field. This is

where it began to rollover. Below is a further view along the vehicle's path to its final rest position.



Someone placed some plastic bins at the points where the tire marks terminated and the rollover began. You can note the final rest position of the Pick-up truck by the dead (yellow) patch of grass in the background. The fluids such as battery acid, coolant, oil, etc. seep out of the vehicle at its rest position and this is what kills the grass - it is fairly simple to locate the final rest position of a vehicle by recognizing such evidence.

The final photo shows the view from the opposite direction, looking north-east from where the Pick-up truck came to rest.



What should be obvious to you is that the vehicle did not travel very far after beginning its rollover - certainly less than 20 metres. This is the tragedy of this event. This was a simple rollover that would likely have resulted in minimal or no injury had the driver stayed inside the cab. A rollover at this speed would not result in any roof crush or anything that would harm a driver as long as a seat belt was properly (snugly) worn. Unfortunately, as happens so often in these events, a person does not think of using a seat belt and this is the tragedy that results.

You could be a gambler, and just like the police constable in the previous article. You could believe you are invincible at whatever speed you travel. Sure, a lucky break here and there will only make you a better believer of that. But the most honest stories that could be told are those that would come from the deceased who were lucky several times and did not heed the warning until it was too late. So let me say it for them: Wear your seat belt and wear it properly. If someone comes along with a story that says seat belts are bad in a rollover, come and see me and I will give you the real facts.