

Preliminary Review of Fatal: March 10, 2011: Egremont & Coldstream Road

It is reported that a fatal collision occurred yesterday, March 10th, 2011, at approximately 1340 hours, at the intersection of Egremont Drive and Coldstream Road just north west of London, Ontario. It would appear that a 75-year-old male driver entered the intersection from a stop-sign control on Coldstream and was struck in the driver's door area by the front end of a General Motors (Regal or Century) passenger car that was travelling straight through on Egremont. The intersection is not of a typical 90-degree geometry and therefore there should be concern that the elderly driver may have been required to turn his head to an unusual position to observe cross traffic. Also such intersections cause the vehicle at the stop sign to travel longer distances through the intersection during which the vehicle is exposed to impact by cross traffic.

Examination of the frontal interior of the Buick Regal/Century shows that its air bag had deployed and therefore the event data recorder (Black Box) should contain a deployment file within which there should be five seconds of pre-crash speed data.

This is a classic case that has long been a problem for the victims who are struck at stop signs and also for police because very often they did not have the solid evidence to prove that the vehicle on the straight-through path was speeding. Elderly drivers are particularly vulnerable because they typically perform their turns or travels through an intersection at a slower pace and secondly their age contributes to their fragility and potential for serious injury and death.

In the present case police should have the opportunity to download the data from the Black Box and examine the speed of the vehicle prior to impact. Also the data will contain information about when the driver released his accelerator and applied his brake. This data should provide information whether the driver on the through road was properly vigilant to the possibility that someone would enter his/her path from the cross road and appropriate charges should be applied if warranted. Unfortunately, in the past, police did not have such specific evidence and the general procedure was to charge the driver who entered the intersection from the stop sign with "failing to yield the right of way". This often had nothing to do with who was actually at fault but more of a law of convenience. This problem persists until today, even with Black Boxes, because the wheels of heavy bureaucracy can rarely change in a life time.

The rest positions of the vehicles place both of them at a considerable distance along the travel path of the Regal/Century with little travel in the pre-crash direction of the fatally injured driver's vehicle. A large difference in speed is apparent and this is expected for such an intersection scenario but my preliminary observation is that the speed difference is a little more drastic than in other collisions suggesting that the

Regal/Century may have been travelling too fast, the elderly driver was travelling slowly, or both.

We will see what further information develops.

UPDATE: March 11, 2011, 1110 Hours

The deceased driver has now been identified as Stuart Gallagher, 74. The driver of the Regal/Century was identified as Tania Johnson, 45 of Sarnia and her daughter, Mariah, 18, was in the right front seat of the vehicle.

Gallagher was reported to be northbound and was struck by the eastbound vehicle operated by Johnson.