

Gorski Consulting Website

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June 30, 2016

Report of First Death In Self-Driving Car Collision Was Delayed By "Only" Two Months

My how news travels fast in this modern age.

A driver was killed in a self-driving Tesla car on May 7, 2016 in Williston, Florida when the Tesla detection system failed to detect a white tractor-trailer that turned in front of the vehicle. The Tesla's brakes were not activated. The collision is being investigated by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

The general public should now get a warm fuzzy feeling of relief knowing that anytime a deadly substance or product is introduced into the marketplace and kills someone, notification will be given in two months that the event actually occurred and the substance or product is indeed deadly. The public can also rest assured that when self-driving cars populate the full world's highways with millions of these products a two-month delay will be in effect before notice will be given that millions of these vehicles will not apply their brakes.

June 28, 2016

Ontario's Newly Announced Mandatory Truck Driver Training Adds Another Layer of Red Tape, Gives Monopoly To Privileged Schools and Provides No Additional Safety Benefit



How will additional driver training prevent the fatal collision and fire that occurred on Highway 402 west of London on June 27, 2016?

Ontario Transportation Minister Steven Del Duca announced today that truck driver training will become mandatory before a driver can take a Ministry approved test to obtain a Class A license. This additional red tape was seemingly needed yet, in the same breathe, it was announced that, in the last 10 years, large truck collisions fell by 40 percent even though the number of registered trucks increased by 19 percent.

The announced training can only occur at selected training centres so many of the independent trainers will be eliminated from the market place. While on face value this would appear to be done for safety purposes the reality is many of those approved training centres were charging high prices for their training and were being under-cut

by the lower priced schools who will now be eliminated. But there has never been any demonstrated proof that those higher priced schools produced safer drivers. The only benefit resulting from this is that a select few individuals who are favoured by the ministry will become the only players on the field, making themselves rich, at the expense of all independent truck drivers and small businesses.

Major safety concerns, such as the cause of the collisions that likely occurred on Highway 402 yesterday, relate to truck drivers' inability to stop in time for stopped traffic ahead, due to truck drivers being unable to detect smaller and quicker vehicles in their blind spots, the large acceleration differences between large trucks and smaller cars and the reality that many trucks must be operated on a limited budget. Such problems cannot be adequately dealt with by simply training a driver for an additional 4 to 6 weeks beyond the training that they would already have received before attempting a Ministry test. Ultimately anyone can put on a performance during a classroom test or at a Ministry test. It is the attitude that the driver takes with him/her after the license has been obtained and when no one is looking or testing that determines most often whether he/she will be a safe driver.

While this latest announcement sounds good in front of a microphone and news media it is a waste of time and money that could be used to better protect the public.

June 27, 2016

What Explanation Could Possibly Exist For This Occurrence?



Why does this very large hole exist on the surface of Wonderland Road south of Highway 402 without any warnings posted to drivers?

Lack of accountability appears to have struck a new low in the vicinity of London, Ontario as evidenced by the very large surface collapse shown in the above photo that Gorski Consulting came across while travelling southbound on Wonderland Road just south of Highway 402. On its own it is a serious issue, however the greater concern is that absolutely no warning sign was posted on the approach to the cavern to warn drivers of the danger.



At least half of the highway lane is encompassed by a road surface failure on Wonderland Road yet no warning is provided of its existence.

Why should anyone feel sympathy for municipalities when they are struck with civil suits for failure to maintain roads when such obvious dangers are left exposed to the travelling public? To make matters worse, the City of London was fully aware of the higher traffic volumes that began to exist on Wonderland Road when a new interchange was built to connect the road to the busy Highway 401 expressway. Even before that interchange was built, engineers from the City of London and from the Province of Ontario would have been in position to know that traffic volumes would increase. Yet such obvious road collapses are allowed to exist.

Police Reportedly "Tight Lipped" Regarding Cause of Fire and Fatal Collision on Highway 402 West of London, Ontario



Will anyone ever be told what caused the death of a person in a fire-filled collision on Highway 402 west of Wonderland Road west of London, Ontario on June 27, 2016?

The above is the closest anyone can approach the scene of a fatal collision on Highway 402 west of Wonderland Road, west of London, Ontario. The collision reportedly occurred near 1500 hours on June 27, 2016. When a collision site is closed for investigation there should be some onus on police to eventually divulge important matters such as what caused the crash. The public has a right to know as anyone could have their life taken away in a similar, future incident. Yet, on a continual basis, such information is rarely provided.

Such circumstances are the mechanism by which lack of responsibility and accountability are allowed to fester. Numerous collisions involving fires have occurred recently without much information revealed whether there is a reason for concern.

June 26, 2016

While Speed Was A Factor In The Death of Khalil Watfa, It Was Not The Only Factor

We at Gorski Consulting must continually correct the news being presented by police and local news reporting agencies regarding the cause of local collisions. This is no less so in the latest head-on collision that occurred on Wilton Grove Road just west of Old Victoria Road in south London, Ontario.

As typical in these circumstances the local news agencies simply report what they are told by police. No longer is there any independent "snooping" or inquiry to follow up on whether what is officially reported is fully correct and complete. While this may be the sign of the economical times when news reporters cannot spend time investigating, the reality is that the general public obtains a false understanding of what were the true causes in a crash.

In the present case, 18-year-old Khalil Watfa was reportedly travelling westbound in a passenger car when his vehicle collided with an eastbound pick-up truck. Watfa sustained fatal injuries. News media quoted police that speed was a factor in the crash. This is an interesting use of words to convey something that is not fully correct. The public reading these words assumes that speed was the only or predominant factor in the crash and no other factor was of relevance. We are certain that both the police and the news media are aware that this is the interpretation that the public reads into these words. For this reason the official reporting of such incidents is misleading and improper.

Beyond what police may learn from witnesses, physical evidence must be a greater source of the information leading to such investigative conclusions. The physical evidence would suggest that Watfa's vehicle was travelling faster than the eastbound pick-up truck at the instant of impact. This is partly so because a pick-up truck would generally be expected to be more massive than a typical passenger car. This is important because of the positions of the vehicles at final rest with respect to point of impact. In the photo below we show the gouges in the eastbound lane of Wilton Grove Road that establish where the two vehicles made initial contact. The pick-up truck travelling from the right to the left and the Watfa vehicle was travelling from the left to the right. After impact the pick-up truck came to rest a short distance east (to the left) of this point of impact. In contrast, the Watfa vehicle came to rest a long distance west (to the right) of the point of impact. All things being equal, the further post-impact travel distance of the Watfa vehicle suggests its greater speed upon leaving the area of impact. Combined with the probability that the Watfa vehicle was less massive leads to the likelihood that Watfa was travelling substantially faster than the pick-up truck at the time of impact.



View, looking south, at the gouges in the eastbound lane of Wilton Grove Road at the point of impact of the vehicles.

But that is not the full story. The actual ground speed of the Watfa vehicle has not been established. Thus, if the head-on collision was of a narrow frontal character this could be a relatively low change in speed caused by the impact and, if there was little drag on the wheels of the Watfa vehicle we might conclude that it was not travelling at an excessive speed. Thus the investigation needs exploration of the severity of the impact to determine that ground speed, as well as estimation of the post-impact drag on the vehicle. In modern times police simply connect their Crash Data Retrieval kit to the diagnostic link connector (DLC) or directly to the air bag control module and they instantly get a download of all kinds of data, including the impact speed of the vehicle. So the investigative process can become quite lazy as investigators rely more and more on the "voice of the box" rather than listening to and understanding what the physical

evidence is saying to them. As we have no official capacity in this matter we are unable to comment on any of the evidence except what we observed at the accident site.

What the physical evidence spoke to us at the site was developed after many years of listening. Listening the gouges, the tire marks, the fluid spills, the post-impact evidence, the road conditions, and so on.

In a typical highway speed head-on collision the evidence is relatively common and typical and if the listener is able to understand that common evidence then the unusual or atypical information stands out like a red cape in a bull ring. The point of impact (POI) is almost always determined by the deepest, fresh gouges. The vehicles rarely come to rest at this POI but spin out in some fashion toward nearby final rest positions. These rest positions are very often with a short distance of the POI. The obvious differences are situations where the velocity or mass of one vehicle is substantially different from the other. Thus the present circumstance is something like that.

What we saw at the site of the present collision was much more evidence of gouging along the path of the Watfa vehicle from impact to rest. There were instances where such gouging was accompanied by the change in direction of the object causing the gouging. This is rather rare. A vehicle which is sliding, tumbling or rolling to rest does not engage in any sharp changes in travel direction. So something was not fully explainable in the short time that we had to examine the site.

Secondly, police reportedly indicated that speed was the only factor in this event. Well, not likely. What we observed was echoed by a resident who came out to speak to us. This individual was rather perturbed that the road condition was exceptionally poor. When driving his tractor and wagons his vehicle was thrown about due to the uneven surface.

The resident also described that a neighbour was given a citation by police who saw that the neighbour's tractor and wagon were wandering on the road. The neighbour responded to police that the reason his vehicle was wandering was because he was attempting to avoid all the bad spots in the pavement. So angered was the neighbour by receiving the citation that he was intending to argue his point in court.

While we heard such comments frequently whenever we are at a site these comments had their merit. The photo below shows a view looking westward along the north edge of the westbound lane of Wilton Grove Road from just east of the point of impact. For example, in the background it is possible to see some construction cones where the eastbound pick-up truck came to rest after the collision. Such road surface conditions are far less than ideal.



View of the broken and deteriorated pavement of the westbound lane of Wilton Grove Road at a location just east of the point of impact.

Furthermore the resident informed us that the gravel shoulder had just been re-graded approximately two days before this collision. We did not need to be told that because we recognized it from the physical evidence. Such fresh re-grading causes the surface of a shoulder to be soft. A vehicle whose right side tires wander onto such a shoulder will "sink" into its softness and this will create a greater drag on those right side tires. Counter-steering at highway speed is a recipe for disaster but it is a common and understandable reaction when it happens unexpectedly. So it would not be surprising that a vehicle would travel out-of-control into the opposing lane. Higher speed would simply increase the probability of this happening but the presence of the soft shoulder and poor road surface are a dangerous combination on their own.

So, was it fully truthful to say to the public that "speed was a factor" and to leave it at that? We do not believe so. When roadway deficiencies exist and they could be a factor in a fatal collision the public must be made aware of that fact. There is frequent discussion by politicians and other public figures about taxes and what should or should not be repaired on a roadway system. It is absolutely crucial that the public, which must go to the ballot box and select a politician with a certain agenda, be made fully aware of the repercussions of tax reductions when those reductions could mean a lack of repair to certain roadways that could lead to potential injuries and deaths. Withholding such

important information about the influence of poor road conditions on death and injury of the general public is unethical and not part of a properly functioning democracy.

Is Greater Usage of Electronics Leading to More Fires in Automobile Collisions?

No one really bothers to ask the question: Why did (at least) 4 persons die in a fiery crash on Highway 400 in Toronto on Friday, June 24, 2016? The usual blurb that is sent over the media wires is that "police are still investigating". And so far as the public is concerned, the police will be investigating until eternity because the conclusion of the "investigating" will never come to light.

The reality is that vehicles that are being involved in collisions are catching fire. Sometimes the consequences are minimal, but sometimes they are not. The question is, with the increased use of electronics in modern vehicles, is there a greater likelihood that a fire will occur? If there is an increased likelihood, the public in general is unlikely to be informed of the problem until many years later, through some unusual circumstance, rather than through normal and proper procedure.

Federal safety standards exist, both in Canada and in the U.S., that are supposed to evaluate the performance of vehicles after certain standardized and controlled collisions but that evaluation is not sufficient. When a fire occurs in a real-life collision it needs to be documented as a potential vehicle defect by being logged into some form of database with a federal transportation agency. Unfortunately many police forces that are the primary investigators of these incidents do not understand the importance of letting the federal regulators know of these occurrences. At the same time, the federal regulators have been so reduced in numbers due to numerous budget cuts over the years that they are incapable of keeping track of such trends even then informed.

June 6, 2016

Fire in School Bus Collision With Tree in Perth County - Not A Trivial Matter



This collision involving a school bus fire after striking a tree was not a trivial matter. While students in the bus reportedly escaped without injury the situation could have been much worse.

Western Division OPP provided the above photo showing a school bus collision in Perth County that occurred Monday morning, June 6, 2016. While preliminary reports indicated that all students safely escaped the blaze, the situation could have been much worse. Gorski Consulting has continued stressing the issue that drownings and fires in collisions are more common than perceived by the general public while these events are also extremely dangerous. While modern vehicles contain various safety features that make them markedly safer than those of just a few decades earlier, none of these safety features can prevent death when a vehicle catches fire or is submerged in water. These matters need the appropriate focus and attention by way of reporting of how they occur and what is being done to prevent situations that could result in multiple fatalities.

Veering To Avoid A Roadway Obstacle - An Under-Reported Cause of Collisions



Veering to avoid an obstacle in a lane can be the cause of many loss-of-control collisions.

The causes of some collisions can be difficult to detect especially when a driver is suddenly faced with an unexpected object lying on the road. Such obstacles can be small in the field of view or difficult to identify in the short time when a driver needs to consider the option of driving into the object or selecting to avoid it. In some instances a vehicle ahead makes a sudden veering action and the driver behind does not understand why, only to be confronted with an object in the lane with very little time to detect it.

As shown in the photo below, objects lying on the roadside can provide evidence of the impact of an object on the road.



A rock lying on the shoulder in the foreground with a tire tread lying on the opposite side of the road in the background - are they related?

Choosing not to avoid an object in the road can have its consequences. In the above photo the rock showed evidence of being struck by vehicle tire as shown in the two photos below.



View of black marks on the rock indicating a possible impact by a tire of a vehicle.



Close-up view of black marks on the rock indicating that it might have been struck by the tire of a passing vehicle.

Striking a rock that is lying on the road is not the same as making contact with an empty paper bag. However, at highway speed, it can be difficult for drivers to identify the object with enough time to consider a reasonable reaction.

Arguments are frequently made in a courtroom setting where drivers are blamed for reacting, or not reacting, to the sudden emergence of an object on a road. These decisions need to be made while keeping in mind the unexpected nature of such events.

Also drivers are not all the same. Professional sprinters can run 100 metres in less than 10 seconds however it would be unreasonable to expect the same performance from an elderly woman carrying a bag of groceries. In the way, not all drivers are capable of performing at equal levels. Yet, all these unequal drivers have the right to drive on our public roads.

June 5, 2016

Biased Reporting Exemplified In Fatal Drowning Collision Near Hagersville, Ontario

Mathieu Guimond of Edmundston, New Brunswick was reportedly killed at approximately 0730 hours on Friday, June 3, 2016 when his northbound pick-up truck drove into a water-filled quarry at the intersection of Haldimand County Road 9 and Sandusk Road just outside of Hagersville, Ontario. It was reported that Guimond's truck

had been involved in a collision with a westbound SUV and this impact directed Guimond's truck into the quarry.

Investigating police were quoted as saying that speeding and lack of seat-belt use were possible contributing factors in Guimond's death. While that may prove to be so, it is the lack of reporting of other obvious facts that lead to the observation that the police investigation is biased.

A properly-trained and unbiased collision analyst would recognize the obvious danger posed by the 20-foot cliff and quarry located just a few metres from the intersection where the collision occurred. This was not a remote, low-traffic-volume location as the presence of the "County" road indicates that County Road 9 is a higher volume road leading in and out of the Town of Hagersville.

It should also have been obvious to the County Engineer, and those familiar with roadway maintenance, that there was the potential that a collision at the intersection could direct wayward vehicles toward the cliff and into the quarry. While the argument could be posed that Guimond's truck passed through a stop sign without stopping and therefore this was the cause of his death, the reality is that neither police, engineers or maintenance personnel could guarantee that a vehicle travelling along the main road, could be prevented from entering the same quarry. Thus it was just chance that led Guimond to his death as it was his vehicle that was directed into the quarry rather than the other vehicle that was travelling with the right-of-way.

What was required at this intersection was some form of barrier, such as a guardrail, that would redirect vehicles from the quarry should a collision or other event, cause a vehicle to travel toward it.

In a bazaar matter of fact, a post-and-wire barrier was located along Sandusk Road north of the intersection likely to protect southbound vehicles from the quarry however this barrier terminated shortly before reaching the intersection with County Road 9. So someone was attuned to the danger that a southbound vehicle might stray into the quarry before reaching the intersection. Yet, the probability of this occurring on the straight section of the lower-volume road was much lower than the possibility of such an occurrence at the intersection. It would seem as if officials were unable to prioritize the levels of danger as if they did not understand where the greater danger existed.

Returning to the police investigation, there was an opportunity to publicize the danger that existed of having an unprotected path into the quarry at this intersection. This condition could lead to fatal consequences to the travelling public no less so than the existence of a drunk driver, the passage a vehicle with defective brakes or if a military cargo vehicle had accidentally dropped a live land-mine in the intersection. Death is death regardless of how it is achieved and police have the obligation to recognize, publicize and ensure that such dangerous conditions are neutralized. As the police have a monopoly on investigation of fatal collisions it becomes that much more imperative

that they spell out, precisely and clearly, what dangers exist to the public. By not identifying the danger that exists at this intersection police become the reason why future collisions occur when such dangers are not neutralized.

As expressed in a number of articles on this website, the reason why investigating police maintain this bias is likely in the training they receive, or do not receive. Historically, police have had little or no training in what constitutes a dangerous road condition. There are numerous opportunities to familiarize police with standards of proper maintenance, design and signage as there was numerous manuals of standards and guidelines that go back decades. The lack in this training and knowledge leads to the existence of unacceptable dangers to the general public that remain hidden and uncorrected.

June 4, 2016

"I Ain't Got No Quarrel With Them Vietcong"

(The Honorable Mr. Muhammad Ali)

**Gorski Consulting
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