

DID YOU KNOW???

ANALYSIS OF A CRASH

Last week's article promoted the concept that crashes on our highways are not really accidents, which implies that nothing could have been done to prevent the incident from happening, to calling them crashes or collisions, which is what they really are.

Take a good look at the aftermath of a two-vehicle crash which happened on State Route 3 in Plattsburgh. The pictured vehicle happens to be my daughter's. She luckily was not injured, a testimony to the energy-absorbing design of today's cars, other than a slight burn from the deployed airbag; nor was the other driver injured, although either or both could have been seriously injured or even killed.



Describing the incident, my daughter had just turned west on SR-3 from Hammond Lane in the Town of Plattsburgh, to return to her home in Gabriels. As she was accelerating after entering Route 3, a pickup truck exited from a business on the north side of Route 3, approximately 600 feet or less west of Hammond Lane, intending to turn left to travel east toward the city. To complete his intended turn, he had to cross both westbound lanes and enter the left of two eastbound lanes. Unfortunately, traffic prevented him from his intended turn for what he described as "a long wait". When he did enter Route 3 he did so right in front of my daughter and unfortunately she hit the left rear side of his truck. He stated that he didn't see her car.

He admitted the crash was indeed his fault, as he failed to yield the right-of-way to a vehicle already traveling on the highway – my daughter.

Was this incident really an accident? There's no question that no one, my daughter or the other driver, ever intended this to happen, but just what contributed to this potentially serious crash?

First, the pickup driver was admittedly tired of waiting for a break in traffic, became impatient and apparently didn't see my daughter's vehicle approaching. Route 3 is a busy four-lane, 40 mph highway in this section. It is difficult to enter this stretch of highway to make a left turn – there is no two-way-left-turn lane to facilitate a left turn entering the highway.

This crash happened so fast that my daughter had no chance to avoid the collision. Speed was not a factor as she hadn't even reached the legal speed limit yet. Drugs and/or alcohol weren't factors either. Distracted driving, maybe? No way. My daughter won't even talk on a hands-free phone when driving – her cell phone message states: "I'm driving; I'll get back to you soon". And the truck driver was trying to enter a busy highway, not doing distracting things.

As I see it, the root cause was failure to yield the right-of-way. This was likely a result of heavy traffic and a driver sick of waiting for a break in traffic which didn't happen soon enough. Like I have been stating for years in these articles, most all crashes are driver error of some kind. Crashes or collisions, yes, but not 'accidents'.