

## **DID YOU KNOW???**

### **DOG IN FRONT SEAT CAUSES LOCAL CRASH**

I have on several occasions written one of these articles on the dangers of having a dog (or any pet) on the driver's lap or anywhere in the front seat, where the animal could interfere with the driver's ability to safely operate the vehicle. Even if the pet doesn't come into contact with the driver, it could pose a distraction.

Now, if you don't believe anything could happen, here's proof that it can. As I reviewed the "Police Log" recently in the Plattsburgh Press-Republican, there was a description of a personal injury crash in Moira where a Brushton woman was injured when a dog in the front seat distracted her and caused her to veer off the road, said police. The incident occurred, according to the police report, when the driver veered off the shoulder of the road, overcorrected, and crossed both lanes of traffic. The vehicle then rolled off the other shoulder and landed on its roof. The driver was taken by ambulance to the University of Vermont Health Network, Champlain Valley Physicians Hospital in Plattsburgh for head and neck pain.

Just think how this could have turned into a much worse crash had there been an oncoming vehicle resulting in a head-on collision.

Dogs and any other similar sized animal should never be allowed to ride in the front seat. Not only can this be a distraction that could cause the driver to lose control of the vehicle, like in this recent incident, but pets should never ride in a seat equipped with frontal air bags which could deploy in a frontal crash injuring them severely. Furthermore, dogs shouldn't be allowed to hang out the window, where dirt or debris could injure their eyes. Pets should always be secured in a harness or crate when riding in a vehicle.

Some states, including most of the New England states can charge the driver under that state's distracted driving law or with interference with the driver's control. So, even if it may not be specifically illegal for a dog to be on a driver's lap in NYS, it may be illegal in other states, and, charges may be levied under distracted driving or interference with driver's control, laws that most every state has, including NY.

In summary, no matter the legality or illegality of driving with a pet on your lap or in the front seat, it is a very dangerous practice and should never be allowed. Besides, it's just common sense, which too often seems to be lacking.