

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

### **WHY CRASHES HAPPEN**

Just about everyone goes someplace by car every day – that’s today’s society versus decades ago, when car trips weren’t so common. In fact, as a little kid growing up in Plattsburgh, my father turned in the license plates and put the car in the garage during winters. Back then, Plattsburgh had city bus service, and the bus went by our house on Draper Avenue at least once per hour.

In today’s world, as we all go somewhere daily in our cars, none of us intends to have a collision or even expects to have one, yet they happen all the time. Why, you ask, do we have so many crashes, which, incidentally kill over 35,000 people in the US annually and injure over two million?

For starters, many drivers today don’t even know much about vehicle and traffic laws, much less obey them. We don’t leave enough space around our vehicles as we drive nor do we pay enough attention to our driving, and, as previously stated, since we don’t expect to crash, we drivers have become way too complacent.

Let’s jump to airlines for a minute. Why don’t airplanes crash? Okay, they do crash occasionally, but not very often, considering there are approximately 200,000 commercial airline flights worldwide every day and sometimes we go years with no crashes.

There are numerous reasons for the safety of air travel. Pilots are highly trained; to maintain their airline transport rating, they require a physical exam every six months, aircraft-type rating and competence check every six months, safety equipment and procedures check every 13 months, and route check every 13 months. NYS drivers are not required to take any refresher courses after receiving their license, and only need to take a vision test upon license renewal every eight years.

Computers (auto pilot) fly most commercial aircraft, air traffic controllers maintain aircraft separation both vertically and horizontally, and aircraft operate with strict rules and regulations.

Would you fly on an airliner if the pilot didn’t know all the rules and regulations? Would you fly on a jet that the pilot didn’t know where all the switches were or what all the dials and meters told him? How about if the pilot hadn’t had a physical in 25 years?

Of course the answers to all these questions would be a capital NO, yet we ride in a car where the driver doesn’t know the traffic laws, is distracted from the task of driving, doesn’t even know if all his lights are working, drives in fog, rain, and snow without lights, and many more negatives, and don’t think anything of it.

In nice weather I sometimes sit on my front porch and observe the traffic on Franklin St (state route 11B) in the village of Malone but close to the village line. The speed limit is still 30 mph, but DOT’s statistics show the average speed both entering the village and also leaving it is between 40 and 45 mph. I watch vehicles traveling so close to the vehicle ahead that should the lead vehicle have to stop quickly, the vehicle following would end up in the lead vehicle’s trunk. Yet we all think of ourselves as “good drivers”. Go figure! Traffic fatalities rising sharply in the US, and some way or somehow we need to control the carnage on the highway. Any great ideas? I’m listening.