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Traffic safety bulletin

## *It's Still Summer*

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In mid-August we don't want to think about winter and the chaos it causes on our roads. Canadians seem to be wary of winter driving, but actually more fatalities occur in the summer. More collisions occur during the winter months, but they tend to be less tragic, because they happen at lower speeds. Over this past summer we have seen some horrific crashes ranging from truck rollovers to racing.

This brings us to the question for this week. **What is the most common collision we have in Ontario?** The answer is a single vehicle collision. The most likely way we will crash is one that we can't blame on anybody but ourselves. Rarely is there a single cause for a collision, but let's look at some of the factors which could come into play.

### SPEED

Without echoing the speed kills mantra, we have to agree that speed is a factor in many single vehicle collisions. The typical summer drive has us a bit less than sharp. Roads and weather are good. Commuting stress is less. Without noticing it, we're cruising along at a speed that doesn't really seem challenging until something else changes. This carefree style is usually attributed to teenagers, but we can all feel young again on a summer day.

Really good drivers are always slightly suspicious of their surroundings. Everything seems fine now, but what if? That's when speeding becomes the factor that pushes us beyond our limits of control. People often argue that our cars and highways are designed for higher speeds than are posted. True enough until another factor is introduced, like a vehicle crowding our lane or not signaling a lane change.

### TWO LANE Highways

Drivers often pick speeds based on the percentage over the limit that they think they can get away with. On the other hand, the police officer has to wonder if this driver is willing to break the speed limit, what other law might they break when they get out of sight over the hill. Ten minutes from now, that driver might be the one who gets cocky enough to be going too fast to deal with the gravel sprayed on the roadway from the last truck to hit the shoulder.

Nobody sees themselves from the cop's point of view until it's too late.

Apart from losing control and becoming a single vehicle crash statistic, the differences in speeds between cars even slightly exceeding the limit and other road users like bicycles or farm equipment is extreme.

The passing maneuver is potentially the most dangerous event on a two lane road. Do not pass over double yellow lines or when the solid line is on your side of the roadway. The entire passing event could take 20 seconds to complete, so plan far ahead for a clear space.

### HEAD ON COLLISION

The other side of the coin is dealing with a driver who makes a poor judgment for their pass and is now trying to share your lane. If you have been paying attention to the surroundings, you would know the condition of the shoulder and if it can be used as an escape route. Look at the space on the shoulder well down the road. (approximately 400 meters at highway speed) and smoothly edge the car towards the shoulder. Remember that old driving school advice about two hands on the wheel? Now is pay off time. Maintain speed so the tires don't sink into a soft surface and expect a tug from the wheel as it meets the gravel edge.

Probably the least predictable of single vehicle crashes is the animal hit. You don't have to go very far outside town to spot deer leaping out of a ditch when startled. Because they haven't learned the rules of the road, they respond by darting and leaping, often into harm's way. The best advice is to simply slow down as rapidly as possible, giving the animal time to clear. The reflex to swerve may create more risk of losing control. Animals often move in families, so keep looking for more, even if you missed the first one.

There's still enough summer left to get out and enjoy a road trip, but keep these tips in mind and make it home safely.

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