



# 401 ACCIDENTS ARE THE NEW FUTURE REALITY OF DRIVING ON CANADA'S HIGHWAYS

DURHAM - Durham Region, with the talk of increasing speeds on highway from 100 to 110km/hr. One has to wonder the safety factor of driving at such speeds.

Even thought expert may find it safe to increase the speed limit by 10km/hr. The real danger lies on driver reaction time and experience.

Just this past week, Durham region was witness to the realities of the 401.

On Monday night police faced the reality of having to handle a very dangerous situation.

On the one hand police had to make a split second decision. Pursue a suspect attempting to get away from police and knowingly driving down the wrong side of the road on one of Canada's most busy highways. This putting the lives of many in danger.

The 20-minute police pursuit appears to have unfolded after the suspect attempted to steal from a liquor store in Bowmanville with an off-duty

officer present. During the incident, the man "pulled a knife on an off-duty officer." A recording of radio calls made that night between emergency services indicated that various police forces were in pursuit.

Officers were pursuing a cargo van after a robbery at an LCBO in Clarington.

The van got on to Highway 401 going the wrong way, causing a multiple vehicle crash.

One of the vehicles involved, a Nissan Sentra, had five people inside. A 60-year-old man and a 55-year-old woman, both visiting from India, were killed in the collision.

Their three-month-old grandson was also pronounced dead at the scene.

In this same vehicle were the parents of the infant, his 33-year-old father and 27-year-old mother, both from Ajax.

The parents were taken to hospital for treatment.

The mother was treated for serious injuries.

From the suspect vehicle, a cargo van, the 21-year-old male driver was pronounced dead at the scene.

A 38-year-old man who was a passenger was taken to hospital for serious injuries.

In the recording, a Whitby OPP dispatcher was heard alerting all officers about the robbery just before 8 p.m.

"They have 12 units behind the vehicle, so we are probably not needed," she said. Minutes later, she relayed the suspect vehicle had taken off "at a high rate of speed" toward Highway 401.

Several Durham police units would be on the highway, she advised.

During the chase, many decisions had to be made across two police forces.

On the one the police are believed to have initiated the pursuit with the intent to end it

before it reached the highway. Unfortunately the suspect eluded police and made his way to the 401.

Here is where it got real dangerous and police could just not back away as lives were on the line.

During the pursuit. By the footage obtained by motorist. It appeared that at times drivers failed to get out of the way of police. To at the least clear the road to one side to give full access to police activities. This making the pursuit situation that much more dangerous and increases the chances of fatalities.

The 20-minute long chase ended in a fiery collision that led to the deaths of four individuals.

At least six vehicles, including a white semi-trailer truck, were involved in the crash.

According to a Durham police supervisor release - he called off the chase just before the box van merged onto the 401, via Stevenson Road in Oshawa, according to an internal police report. But officers continued to

speed after the suspect, as oncoming cars swerved to dodge the chaos.

One of the officers said they believed the police presence on the highway would "alert the public that something was wrong and hopefully they see the suspect vehicle to get out of the way.

The collision happened roughly three minutes after the senior officer tried to call off the chase, it continued.

A driver in a vehicle that seen the police and the van in question could not believe his eyes on how many motorist drove by not even noticing what was going on.

Some when they realized something was up, appeared that they did not know what to do.

Fred Rea, Oshawa said, "It got scary when drivers kept the speed and drove as almost not they did not see the wave of police cars coming at them. Then they panicked and slammed the brakes making it very dangerous. If anything I think there

should be better highway driving training. I pulled off the road and waited till all was clear. I did hear a loud ripping sound and more emergency vehicles following. Ambulances and fire trucks. I stayed on the shoulder. Many just slowed down and kept on going."

In addition to the four fatalities, the driver of a transport truck, seen in cellphone videos with the front severely damaged, sustained minor injuries.

A spokesperson for Nour Transport, a Quebec-based trucking company said the driver was doing OK and was released from the hospital Tuesday morning.

The SIU says seven investigators, one forensic investigator and one collision reconstructionist continue to investigate this case.

The SIU is urging anyone who may have information about this investigation, including video or photos, to contact the lead investigator at 1-800-787-8529

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