

REAL LIFE LESSONS

FROM TRUCK DRIVERS INJURED AT WORK



Deer, Dogs and Damage

This subject was discussed in a Real Life Lesson newsletter in 2009, but it is worthy of “rediscussion” because it continues to happen. Too many drivers are avoiding animal strikes and subsequently sustaining significant personal injury. Seth swerved to avoid a deer in October 2008 while driving along a secondary road in Pennsylvania. As a result he wrecked his truck and received several broken bones, but he was successful in missing the deer. A similar event occurred in July 2010 when George was navigating his way through light interstate traffic just outside Cincinnati. A stray dog was in the roadway and George chose to brake and steer away – right into the concrete barrier that separated him from oncoming traffic. This evasive action was taken with no regard for the fact that he could lose control of his vehicle and impact other vehicles on his side of the interstate, or even worse, jump the concrete barrier and crash head-on into the oncoming traffic with much greater force.

In each event the driver was injured. In each event the animal was not. Both trucks sustained significant damage. Fortunately no other motorist was involved.

LIFE LESSON

Driving at higher speeds reduces the time available to think and react to any situation. Therefore, it becomes important to continuously anticipate the road conditions ahead just in case something develops that could require evasive action.

Accept the fact that the roadways will continue to have more wildlife and even domestic animals on them. Large urban areas are now experiencing an unprecedented increase in the number of wild dogs. The coyote population has exploded and now exists in all states except Hawaii. It has been stated that there are now more wild turkeys and deer in the U.S. than there was when Daniel Boone was hunting them for survival. And the Armadillos seem to be steadily migrating eastward. This means that there will be more “living” obstacles on the roads and more occasions for animal strikes.

Finally, if these situations occur more often and require immediate, evasive action by the driver then it stands to reason that drivers should condition their response to save time because they will not have the time to think prior to acting. What does that mean? Immediately grasp the steering wheel with both hands and “safely” brake. Contact with the animal may occur and result in minor damage. Serving to avoid contact with the animal most often results in significant damage (property and injury) – just ask Seth and George.



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