

Big rigs causing big traffic headaches on Hwy. 401 in Northumberland

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And on Jan. 25, several cars smashed into a jackknifed tractor trailer, spawning a series of collisions involving approximately 80 vehicles, just west of Northumberland's boundary.

Between 2006 and 2010, there were eight jackknife and three rollovers involving transport trucks in Northumberland County, according to the MTO.

Jackknifed tractor trailer incidents appear to be on the rise in recent weeks but according to the Ministry of Transportation, the number of fatalities in large truck collisions has declined 50 per cent from 197 to 99, between 1990 and 2009 in Ontario. The decline comes despite the fact that there has been a 59 per cent increase in the number of large trucks registered in Ontario, said Emna Dhahak, an MTO media officer.

The Northumberland tractor trailer accidents in recent weeks have not resulted in life threatening injuries but a Pickering man died when his SUV collided head-on with a transport truck on County Road 28 on Nov. 10.

The reason why transport truck rollovers or jackknifings happen is different in every case, said

Northumberland OPP Constable Karen German. Some collisions are caused by driver error, weather conditions or speed. Drivers should be aware transport truck drivers need more time to stop.

"The reactionary time is a lot longer than car... you can't expect them to stop on a dime," said Const. German.

There does seem to be more collisions involving transport trucks on the stretch of Hwy. 401 near Grafton, she said. But Const. German could not say why nor could she provide statistics. In the case of the jackknife on Feb. 18, the cause is not yet known but bone dry road conditions suggest it wasn't weather related, said Const. German.

"I saw the trailer had split in half," said Mr. Barrie after the accident. Mr. Barrie was in one of many cars stopped for hours on the eastbound lanes of the highway that day. The back trailer of the transport truck had dislodged, slid across the highway and smashed a vehicle into the guardrail.

Many of the incidents in recent weeks have occurred in poor weather and Const. German said people need to drive according to weather conditions.

"Just because it says 100 km/h doesn't mean you have to go 100

km/h," she said.

When it comes to safety there is a movement afoot to reduce transport truck collisions, said Marco Beghetto, vice president of communications for the Ontario Trucking Association. Roll stability control systems are a relatively new technology, which reduce the truck speed when sensors detect instability, said Mr. Beghetto. The U.S. is

working on mandating the roll stability systems in transport trucks, he added. "We believe that it would be a game changer for highway safety in general," said Mr. Beghetto. Many of the Ontario Trucking Association members are already using the devices and see the benefits, he said.

There are several safety measures already in place. Ontario has some

of the highest fines in North America for operating an unsafe commercial vehicle -- as high as \$20,000 and for some offences, as high as \$50,000, said Ms. Dhahak. A New Entrant Education and Evaluation program should also help new truck and bus companies in Ontario understand regulations, and they are tested on the rules for safely operating on roads, she added.

POLICE BRIEFS

Cause of Port Hope woman's death undetermined

PORT HOPE -- The cause of a 28-year-old Port Hope woman's sudden death on the Family Day long weekend is still unknown.

The woman was found dead in a Port Hope home in the early afternoon of Monday, Feb. 18. A post-mortem examination in Toronto on Feb. 19 came back with an undetermined cause of death, said Port Hope Police Staff Sergeant Bryant Wood. The police will wait for the results of the toxicology screening, which is expected to take up to three months to receive, said Staff Sgt. Wood. The name of the woman is being withheld at the request of her next-of-kin, he said.

Grafton man faces assault charges

GRAFTON -- A Grafton man faces assault charges after a man and woman reported being threatened with a knife.

Police responded to a complaint of a man threatening his girlfriend and her brother with a knife at a Station Road residence in Grafton on Feb. 19 at approximately 7 a.m., OPP report. According to the OPP the man left the home before police were called.

A 52-year-old man from Grafton has been charged with assault with a weapon, possession of a weapon for

a dangerous purpose and utter threats to cause death or bodily harm. The accused was held for a bail hearing on Feb. 19 at the Ontario Court of Justice in Cobourg at 1:30 p.m. The accused cannot be named in order to protect the identity of the victims.

Cobourg residents charged with drug trafficking

COBOURG -- Two people were arrested on drug charges on Saturday.

The two adults were arrested after Cobourg Police searched a D'Arcy Street address on Feb. 16 at approximately 5 p.m., said Cobourg Police Detective Scott Bambridge.

Police seized about one ounce of cocaine, with a street value of \$2,800, \$285 in cash, and drug paraphernalia, said Det. Bambridge.

Glenn Moore Jr., 34, of Cobourg, and Sara Bragg, 25 of Cobourg, have both been charged with possession of cocaine for the purpose of trafficking, possession of marijuana, and possession of property obtained by crime. Mr. Moore Jr. has also been charged with two counts of failing to comply with a probation order and was held in custody. Ms. Bragg was issued a summons to appear in court.

Anyone with information on this or any other crime can contact the Cobourg Police Service at 905-372-2243 or Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477.

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