

PREVENTING

MOTOR-VEHICLE

COLLISIONS

... it all rides on you!



— Martin Lesperance

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CHAPTER 6

TRAFFIC SIGNS ARE THERE FOR A REASON

Many people take traffic signs for granted and don't appreciate how important their messages are. Others become so complacent and think the sign doesn't apply to them because they are such "good drivers," or refuse to pay attention to them for different reasons. While I was writing this chapter, two bad crashes happened in the area where I live. The traffic signs were in place but, for whatever reason, the drivers didn't pay attention or follow their advice.

Two women died in a collision. They were in a van when they approached a stop sign on a secondary road. Instead of stopping, they sped right past the stop sign and were broadsided by a semi-trailer. Both women died while the driver of the truck received minor injuries. In this case, the truck driver didn't have enough time to stop his truck to avoid the collision.

We see a lot of traffic signs. They tell us to stop, yield for other traffic, merge onto roads, slow down, speed up, turn right, turn left or not turn right or left. There are even signs that tell us to go straight. Signs warn of ice on bridges. They warn of moose, deer and rocks on the road. Signs tell us how fast we should go under ideal conditions, and to drive carefully. It's important to realize these signs are there for a reason. They cost money to erect and maintain. The cities, towns and



highway departments do not put the signs up to create jobs. They put them up to save lives! It pays to pay attention to the signs. They are there for a reason. People who drive just as well as you do have been killed or maimed on exactly the same stretch of road you are traveling on.

The next day, another collision happened when a driver drove on the wrong side of the highway. He collided with a van, killing a five-year-old boy and seriously injuring the boy's pregnant mother. The mother suffered a seriously fractured leg, and spinal injuries. Two days later, medical staff induced her pregnancy and the baby was born early. All this because someone didn't pay attention to a traffic sign.

These collisions would have been so simple to prevent. All the drivers had to do was concentrate, and obey the sign.

A NOTE ON SPEED SIGNS AND ROAD CONDITIONS

If you are approaching a curve on the highway and the sign is posted at 40 mph (60 kph), it means slow down to that speed under ideal conditions. It doesn't mean you should be travelling at that speed during heavy rainstorms, freezing rain or blizzards. The speeds posted are for optimal road conditions. Poor conditions can make driving extremely dangerous on a road that is normally an easy drive.

It amazes me what you'll see while driving on a highway that's icy. There could be dozens of vehicles in the ditch, and yet cars will drive by you as if the road were in excellent condition. Those are the people you'll often see in the ditch a bit farther up. Drive according to road and weather conditions.