

A Funny Thing Happened on the Way from the Seminar

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Incident Report

On returning from an Australian College of Road Safety, Aged Drivers Seminar held at Carseldine Campus of the Queensland University of Technology, I was involved in a traffic incident near the entrance to the Drummond Industrial Estate. This event took place at approx. 6.30pm on the evening of 28th March, 2008. Light rain was falling and mist rising from the surface of the road. It was dark and a combination of wet surface, rising mist and reflected light made road markings very difficult to see.

There is no street lighting in the area and there are no lights marking the intersection. There are however many security lights on the surrounding industrial buildings which were the cause of the reflections. I turned right into what I thought was the entrance to the Industrial Estate to find that my car was perhaps some 30/40 metres south of the entrance. In order to clear the South bound lane I continued into the water table drain with the front wheels of the car. We were now stuck fast with the front wheels of the vehicle spinning freely in the water and the underbody resting firmly on the bank.

The car was then towed out of this situation by my colleagues Chris Grivell, Geoff Clive and a passing tow-truck driver. I thank these people for their timely assistance. No injury or vehicle damage resulted from this event.

Lessons We Might Learn from this Misadventure

1. We drive where we look. I incorrectly perceived the position of the entrance to the Industrial Estate. I drove to where I thought it was.
2. At my age, 68 years, eyesight checks should be regular. I will be bringing forward my regular due visit to the optometrist.
3. Having always disliked night driving I will be planning fewer night drives.
4. This is my first on road incident in over 50 years of driving on road. Beware of complacency!!!!!!!!!!!!
5. It would be timely to bring to the attention of the Main Roads Dep't the situation regarding this intersection. The delineation of the intersection is primarily confined to road markings. The conditions prevailing on the evening of the 28th March, 2008 made these markings very difficult to see.
6. A subject highlighted at the ACRS seminar was the lack of visual contrast in road markings and signage. The combination of lights, reflections and misty rain made the whole scene very difficult to interpret. By contrast the raised kerb or traffic islands and better lighting at the intersection just a kilometer north, at the junction of the Bruce Highway and Brisbane Road was easily identified and negotiated.
7. Research carried out by Blair Turner and Micheal Tzotis and presented in a paper at the Australian Road Safety Research, Policing and Education Conference at Surfers Paradise 25/27th October 2006 found that the establishment of Splitter islands at intersections reduced crashes by 35% to 45%
8. It is my intention to use this event as first hand experience in our overall attempt to create a safer road environment.

Further Comments

The ACRS Seminar was very interesting, with the speakers presenting some very salient points. I think that the relevance of several of these was proven to me by my little misadventure on the way home.

Now after almost a quarter of a century presenting driver education and training I would like to share some points that have guided the philosophy of our presentations.

1. Vision – Perception- Response.— The inherent human vision, perception, response system is based on a top speed of about 25 kph. We now travel our roads at rates several orders of magnitude above that speed.
2. Most police crash reports contain the concept of 'I didn't see it officer, I didn't see it until it was too late'. Many thousands of our participants have included this concept when talking to us about their crash experiences.
3. In a difficult or a threatening situation we are going to drive to where we are looking. It is best that we look to and correctly identify where we want to go.

The relevance of these concepts was well and truly brought home to me, first hand, on the evening of the 28th March.