

A deadly mess on 400

2 killed as winter arrives with vengeance

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Sun Media, Toronto

A trucker is dead and a second motorist was severely injured in two separate crashes that shut down Hwy. 400 during yesterday's evening rush.

The OPP were busy cleaning up another fatal crash north of the city last night.

Sgt. Bruce Pritchard said one person was killed when a pick-up truck rolled around 5:30 p.m. in the area of Hwys. 89 and 10 near Alliston.

The mayhem caused by the GTA's first snowstorm included delayed air travel and the morning rush hour averaging one collision per minute.

The long list of minor traffic mishaps throughout the day became deadly about 1:15 p.m. on Hwy. 400.

OPP Const. Dave Woodford said a 51-year-old truck driver, who was wearing his seatbelt, died after he was ripped out of his five tonne produce truck as it hit the Finch Ave. bridge.

He was trying to avoid crashing into an out-of-control car, which had hit a cement barrier, when his truck flipped over, spilling produce on the highway.

Woodford said the car, with two passengers who suffered injuries, was on the southbound ramp from westbound Finch when it went out of control on the wet pavement, hit the barrier and spun into the path of the truck.

Sgt. Cam Woolley said the truck's cab was demolished as it hit the bridge and experts will have to check if the overpass was damaged.

He said a possible contributing factor to the collision was that one of the car's rear-tires was over inflated, and the car had four different tires.

In the other accident in the northbound lanes at Hwy. 7, an air ambulance was used to transport a seriously injured man to Sunnybrook



Photo: Alex Urosevic

A truck driver was ripped from his cab and died when he crashed into the Finch Ave. bridge on Hwy. 400 yesterday while trying to avoid an out of control car.



Photo: Dave Thomas

A quartet of snowplows lead commuters down Hwy. 400 during yesterday's morning rush hour. Left: Brett Young and his dad Wayne have a snoutful while shovelling the drive.

hospital. Two cars collided and one of them spun into the path of an on-coming tractor-trailer.

Frozen rail switches in Oshawa were to blame for GO Transit delays on the Lakeshore east line, with trains delayed up to 40 minutes yesterday morning and GO buses were up to 90 minutes late.

Toronto also issued its first extreme cold weather alert, ensuring at least 70 additional beds were made available for the homeless, as well as out-reach services.

Woolley said many motorists seem to have forgotten their winter driving skills. "They were totally taken by surprise. This one is particularly nasty with the mix. I've been in fluffy snow, ice pellets, freezing rain, a real mixture," he said.

The 10 to 15 cm of snow was like driving through "brown sugar with ice underneath it" Woolley said.

"It took me triple the amount of time it normally takes it normally takes me to get to work," Larry Jackson of Unionville wrote to torontosun.com. "I don't even get it. We live in Canada, we all know it's going to snow but every year people drive like idiots when the first snowflake hits the ground."

Don Nault of Huntsville said he drives according to the conditions and gave himself extra time to get to work.

"I start work at 5 a.m., but I leave home at 4:15 a.m. and it's only a five minute commute to work" he said. "I do have to get my winter tires on today after work"

Woolley said drivers have to winterize their vehicles, slow down, stay five or six seconds behind the vehicle in front, not wait too long before applying brakes, look where you want a sliding vehicle to go and steer in that direction.

"As much as people want to blame the snow and the bad weather, is almost always involves poor judgement about speed or following distance," Woolley said.

About half an hour after the 400 was re-opened the OPP stopped a vehicle travelling more than 50 kms over the posted limit of 100 km/h at Hwy. 89 north of Bradford.

The driver's licence was suspended for seven days.