

DISASTER IN THE MAKING A DAY IN THE LIFE

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Deadly Distractions

In the hectic and fast-paced energy industry, getting to and from the job shouldn't be an invitation to disaster - **by Aimee Barnabe**

When my friend Colin got up for work yesterday morning, his day looked a little like this:

- Woke up at 6 a.m. after five hours of restless sleep.
- Skipped breakfast because there was nothing appealing in the fridge anyway.
- Had a quick shower and got dressed.
- Scraped last night's snow and frost off his pickup truck.
- Called his girlfriend to tell her he loved her and couldn't wait to see her the following week.
- Departed his acreage near Calgary at 6:30 a.m. to pick up a colleague in Red Deer.
- Drove 130 kilometres an hour and arrived in Red Deer in under 90 minutes.
- Picked up his colleague, filled up his truck, bought an energy drink to give himself a pick-me-up.
- Drove to Edmonton.
- During the drive he talked to his colleague, fielded three calls from his girlfriend and two work calls, programmed his GPS with the coordinates for the work site he was travelling to, and found the new track to play for his colleague on his MP3 player.
- Arrived at the job site in under 90 minutes, despite the low-lying fog that hung in the air for most of the trip.
- Worked on the assigned project for eight hours.
- Dropped his colleague off in Edmonton.
- Jumped back in his truck, eager to return to his acreage to feed his dogs as they had been alone all day.
- Picked up fast food at the drive-thru to eat on the way home.
- Drove the 326 kilometres, aimed into the sun for the first half of the trip with 60 kilometre an hour crosswinds for the second half.
- During the drive he changed radio stations half a dozen times and called his girlfriend to pass the 'dead time' during the routine journey.
- Arrived home at 9:15 p.m.
- Fed and walked the dogs for 45 minutes. Completed paperwork for 45 minutes. Did laundry and watched TV to unwind until 1 a.m.
- Went to bed and got some rest for the next day that would look a lot like the last one.

Okay...so the scenario is a little staged, but how far off from the average person working in the oil and gas sector is it really? How many pieces of Colin's little routine

are we guilty of and what are the consequences? By the way, Colin is a real person, Colin is really his name, and he has done all of the things I described above. He is still with us, amazingly enough, but he is re-evaluating some of his choices now.

The International Association of Oil and Gas Producers (OGP) Land Transportation Safety Implementation Task Force has some advice for our friend Colin. Their website states, "Driving-related accidents are the single largest cause of fatalities in E&P [exploration and production] related operations. Since 1998, OGP member companies have reported that 158 upstream workers have died in such accidents. Studies conducted by the World Health Organization predict that road deaths will increase and that by 2010 they will be the second-largest contributor to mortality globally."

If that isn't a wake-up call to get on the bandwagon for Journey Management I'm not sure what is! According to OGP report No. 365, "*A successful journey is measured by the lack of any accidental loss or delay due to a vehicular event.*" So, was Colin's journey successful? By the strictest of measures-Colin survived his little daytrip, after all-it was a success, but that was due more to good luck than good management. Things like electronic devices, distractions, fatigue, and escalating factors all have to be considered in Journey Management, and from the perspective of practicing good Journey Management, most experts in the field would say that Colin's journey was far from successful.

We are bombarded daily by advances in technology. Cellphones that are cameras, music players, photo albums, and police scanners. (Yes, there's an App for that.) GPS navigation systems like little TV sets built right into the dash. Satellite radio so that you can have any music or talk radio station you desire right at your fingertips.

They are all great tools, but are we using them appropriately? Most people would say no. According to the Traffic Injury Research Foundation's 2002 Road Safety Monitor, 40 per cent of Canadians believe distracted driving is a serious problem. In a 2004 survey by Safer Calgary, 89 per cent of Calgaryans expressed concern with drivers using cellphones.

There are several types of driver distractions: visual (looking at a GPS monitor), auditory (carrying on a conversation with a passenger or on the phone), physical (eating, drinking, changing radio stations), and cognitive (lost in thought). Distractions can also occur simultaneously. Colin was visual-programming his GPS-while auditory-talking to his colleague-and cognitive-thinking about his upcoming trip to see his girlfriend.

Dr. Don Melnychuk of Nadon Consulting in Edmonton is an expert in the areas of fatigue and stress management and asserts, "*Fatigue is the consequences of inadequate restorative sleep.*" In his presentations to industry he quotes Alberta Motor Association statistics that suggest that fatigue is a factor in more than 50 per cent of all single-vehicle collisions and Workers' Compensation Board studies that found that

between 1996 and 2005, motor vehicle incidents accounted for 31.7 per cent of fatalities.

Those are some sobering numbers, particularly for Colin. If we examine Colin's lifestyle through Dr. Melnychuk's microscope we would be shocked to find that he is basically operating impaired most of the time. According to the good doctor, a week of 4 to 5 hours of sleep per night impairs your mental and physical performance to the same extent as if you had a blood alcohol level of about .10 per cent-legal impairment in most North American jurisdictions.

Adherence to the Journey Management process significantly reduces such risk factors, and the OGP has established an industry recommended practice (IRP) based on the concept. Adopting the Schlumberger driving standard in 2005 as the foundation for the IRP, the OGP has developed a flexible and comprehensive Journey Assessment tool. The form sets up an evaluation method and assigns a risk level to each trip. Level 1 is low risk (less than 14 points), Level 2 is medium risk (15 to 24 points), and Level 3 is high risk (more than 25 points). Evaluation points like security, number of vehicles, distance from base, road conditions, day versus night driving, weather, communication, driver hours on duty, trip duration, and driving contractors' usage are all given a score. You simply add them up to find your risk level.

Submitting Colin's day trip to the evaluation process yielded a score of 52, which makes it "routine with escalating factors." OGP has a whole list of escalating factors that crank up the risk dynamic, including weather, road conditions, driver experience, and wildlife.

It is all well and good to sound the alarm bell, but it does no good if we don't make a change. Colin has decided that he needs to make some changes to his routine.

He is going to take Journey Management seriously and get adequate rest (at least seven hours a night in a quiet, cool place), adopt a grazing strategy to eating: instead of skipping meals and gorging, hydrate throughout the day, pull over and take rest breaks, and make time for physical and social activities in his schedule. In addition, he has committed to programming his GPS before he departs, leaving the satellite radio alone, and driving to the road conditions-even if that means he gets to his destination five minutes later.

Most importantly, he is looking at his cellphone in a whole new light. It's still in his vehicle in case of emergency, but it's turned off.

Most of us view time in our vehicles as 'dead time.' We tend to try to fill it with activities that we didn't get done before we got in the vehicle or with things to pass the time. Journey Management is designed to elevate driving from a passive state to an active state. Colin told me something that made perfect sense. He changed his behaviour because he did not want his 'dead time' to become deadly.