

# Sharing OUR Recovery

A quarterly newsletter dedicated to support victims, survivors, caregivers and loved ones of motor vehicle collisions.

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ISSUE 25

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Editor in Chief - Dawne McKay

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Supporting Crash Survivors  
One Step at a Time

## Rest, Reflect, Renew, Rejoice

As the year draws to a close, it is the perfect time for us to reflect. We are so grateful to be able to provide a unique one-of-a-kind website dedicated to motor vehicle crash survivors. Our focus continues to be on developing more resources and referral pathways to the hundreds of thousands of people that are affected by a motor vehicle crash every day and how they can be further supported. We are excited to enter 2024 with new possibilities on the horizon for every crash survivor recovering as well as The Crash Support Network.

Many thanks to Personal Injury Attorney, David Craig for inviting me back as a guest on the [After the Crash Podcast](#) to speak with Alana McGuire who speaks about managing the aftermath of being involved in a reckless driving crash. Please have a listen to this highly informative podcast.

A special thanks to Author and Crash Survivor, Candi Puleo who hosted a Crash Survivor Give-Away within our online support group and graciously gave away 11 copies of her book, ["Journey to My First Step A Crash Survivor's Story"](#) just in time for the holidays.

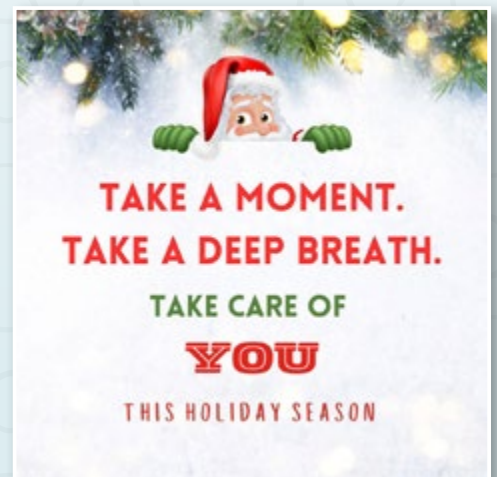
In our 25th Issue, you will read an open letter from a crash survivor to the driver that caused their crash, you will read some tips to help you prepare when you are being discharged from a trauma hospital, you will learn who may be at fault in a bad weather crash, we include an important Post Crash Tip for the Holidays and you will also hear from a crash survivor that approaches each day with gratitude.

We are so grateful to every one of our followers, sponsors, subscribers, supporters and members. Thank you for connecting with The Crash Support Network and for your support.

Recovering at Christmas is like unwrapping the gift of resilience and finding strength in the glow of hope.

Wishing you a season of comfort and renewal,

- Dawne



I'm not really a science guy... I have several high school teachers who would attest to that fact. Lately though, I've been reading about quantum physics, and have been intrigued by the concepts of randomness and entropy. Entropy is a measure of disorder within a system, generally used in thermodynamics. As I read, I started to think about order and disorder, and how it parallels the battle many of us are fighting today. Most of us remember the day our lives were thrown into chaos, uncertainty, disorder. Others, like me, don't remember any of it, but are well aware of the effects that moment has had on our lives. And how hard we're all working to restore order in our lives.

Randomness is a fundamental behavior in quantum physics and this assertion is supported by statistical studies showing that it's impossible to distinguish the behavior of the universe from random. This led me to consider some fundamental questions regarding the day my life was thrown into disorder.

Why did it happen?

Why did it happen to me?

Why then?

Why there?

Why, why, why?

When giving a talk at a conference, I was asked "do you ever wonder what your life would be like if, on the day of your crash, you had stayed home for one more cup of coffee?" I have wondered that, but I don't anymore. Not because it's depressing, or upsetting. I don't think about that because if I accept that, what about the 10 000 other times I stayed late, left early, got delayed, zigged instead of zagged. All that energy and heartache, trying to un-ring a bell - a bell that, at that moment in space and time, tolled for me.

I'm not a fatalist, I don't resign myself to a predetermined future or destiny. I don't. I just think the traffic on our roads

is a great model of entropy. When rules are observed, order prevails. When the system decays, we stop observing rules, we stop caring for those around us and become consumed with our own needs, desires... chaos ensues.

### So why me?

I was a good rider, and I was conservative and responsible in the saddle. But... why not me?

- I chose to get on a motorcycle.
- I was fully aware of the risks associated with riding.
- I was fully aware of the current state of disorder on our roads.
- I knew the risks were real - and I accepted those risks, not just on my own behalf but on behalf of my wife, my children, my friends - firefighters, EMTs, trauma teams... the decisions I made affected many, many people.

### Why then?

Yes, one minute either way would have made a world of difference. But... what about the countless times this didn't happen:

- The time I held up at an intersection because my 'spider senses' tingled, only to watch a gravel truck blow the red light and careen through the space that would have been occupied by me.
- Or the time I had to lock it up at highway speed, narrowly missing another crash.
- Or the countless other times I escaped catastrophe completely unbeknownst to me.

Why there?

- I was on a surface road, doing around 60k, not really what I'd consider a risky situation. But... why not there? Irresponsible behaviour on the road can happen anywhere, not just on highways.

Instead, I like to ask more hopeful questions:

### Why am I alive?

- I was hit head-on by a car doing 120kph while I was doing 60 in the opposite direction - many have died in far less violent crashes.
- I was hit and thrown into busy midday traffic - yet was missed by all other vehicles on the road.



- The car that hit me slid through two lanes of oncoming traffic yet hit no one else - all that chaos yet no one else was hurt.
- I had some 45 fractures in my body, including multiple vertebrae - yet, somehow my spinal cord was undamaged.
- My brain injury has created some inconveniences - but my cognitive and executive functions have remained largely unchanged.
- My crash certainly could have caused mental and emotional damage - yet the post-trauma effects have been minimal. Following a crash, so many experience emotional distress such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, anguish, fearfulness, issues with sleep, reoccurring nightmares about the crash and more. Yes, there have been issues, challenges... but, it could have been so much worse.

There are some practical explanations for my survival:

- I was wearing a high-end helmet.
- I was wearing full gear – the first lesson in motorcycle school - always gear up, no matter how fast or slow, near or far you're travelling.
- I was travelling at the speed limit, with the flow of traffic – any additional speed on my part could have made the crash even more violent.

All of these factors aided my survival, but there's still a gap in which I could have succumbed to my injuries. I know in my heart that I was blessed on that day. We all have our own journey, and I can only speak to mine. Living in a rehab facility, I quickly learned that many crash survivors face far more daunting challenges than I. I would never imagine speaking on behalf of all of us, I can only speak to where I am on that road back to order.

I lost a leg, proper function in half my body, sight in one eye... yet I know how fortunate I am. I still have my life, not a discounted life, not a consolation life... a life – my life. And I do my best, despite the pain, the limitations, to approach each day with gratitude. I have my family, I have my friends, I have my faith - all of which carried me through the most challenging days. Life stood by me, and I strive each day to be worthy of the gift I have been given.

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Andrew Lawlor is a motorcycle crash survivor. Since July, 2018 he has drawn on the love and support of his family and his community, working to repair body, mind and soul. Andrew knows everyone's journey is unique, and hopes that fellow survivors might find a new perspective, or encouragement in the stories he tells. The Crash Support Network is thrilled to announce a collaboration with Andrew as he shares his journey through ongoing contributions to our Crash Survivor Blog.

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## After the Crash

Watch "After the Crash" Podcast Episode 37 – A Crash Survivor's Perspective with guests Alana McGuire & Dawne McKay.

Episode 37 - A Crash Survivor's Perspective || After the Crash Podcast - YouTube

[https://youtu.be/YM8OT44wCCA?si=LXOxIwp\\_klYKPkhr](https://youtu.be/YM8OT44wCCA?si=LXOxIwp_klYKPkhr)



The Crash Support Network publishes a Crash Survivor Blog where you will find Dawne sharing her personal experience along with tips and advice as well as guest bloggers which help crash survivors all across the globe.



# Who is At Fault in Bad Weather?

Submitted by Chorney Sidhu Injury Lawyers

Most people already know that Canadian winters bring some of the harshest conditions to the roadways. Black ice, snow, sleet, and hail can make a short trip to the grocery store seem perilous. If a winter drive leads to an accident, you may wonder, "In bad weather, who is at fault in a car accident?" Since determining who is at fault in an accident usually has implications for insurance claims, understanding the law's view of bad weather becomes essential.

## What Someone Could Consider Bad Weather Conditions

When asking, "In bad weather, who's at fault in a car accident," You must first dissect what the law considers bad weather. So before diving into the different legal conditions behind these cases, let's define which weather conditions qualify as "bad." Common weather conditions that can often result in accidents include:

- Whiteout conditions
- Black ice
- Heavy winds
- Rain and flooding
- Heavy fog

If you got in a car accident because of any of these weather conditions, you might want to blame the seasons for your collision. Insurance claims rise by more than 45% in Ontario between the months of December and February. However, even if the law recognizes bad weather as a factor in your incident, blaming natural forces might not work.

## Negligence and Liability in Bad Weather Accident Cases

The law views car ownership as a responsibility and requires that drivers adjust their behaviours to keep others safe. Failing to meet these expectations can result in negligence as a driver. Furthermore, certain vehicle conditions can also make you a negligent driver in the eyes of the law. Some driving behaviours that determine negligence include:

- Failing to increase brake distances on slippery roads
- Driving the same speed regardless of road conditions
- Remaining too close to other vehicles during adverse weather
- Accelerating through turns while roads are slippery or wet
- Avoiding the use of your headlights during low visibility
- Driving while distracted in any way



Vehicle conditions that qualify as negligent include:

- Using a vehicle with worn-out tires
- Operating a car with malfunctioning brakes
- Driving without properly functioning windshield wipers
- Navigating low visibility without working lights

## Will My Insurance Company Approve My Claim?

If you sustain significant property damage during a bad weather accident, you'll probably want to file an insurance claim for assistance with the financial burden of repairs and vehicle restoration. Ontario offers no-fault insurance, which means companies may approve claims regardless of who is at fault during the accident. The level of compensation depends on the insurance company and policy, however.

Minimum insurance in Ontario includes provisions for damages when you are at fault, injuries regardless of fault, and damages from drivers without insurance. However, only adding collision coverage can protect you when you sustain property damage and retain fault for the accident.

## Essential Steps to Take After an Accident

You must know how to react if you get into a bad weather accident. Preparing for these possibilities can help you respond appropriately to an accident. Some essential steps to take after a bad weather accident include:

- Do not apologize or admit guilt of any kind

continues on page 5





*Who is At Fault in Bad Weather?, cont.*

- Do not claim to feel okay, as injuries could present themselves after the fact
- Quickly inform your insurance provider
- See your doctor for an exam
- Take pictures and video to document the scene
- Read any documents that doctors, police, or public officials give you

## How To Prepare for Cold Weather Driving


Preparing for cold weather driving may allow you a safer road experience. Keep essential supplies in your car to prepare for these weather conditions. These supplies include:

- Gloves
- Shovel
- Extra layers and blankets
- Jumper cables
- Windshield wiper fluid
- Flashlight
- First aid kit

Drivers need to use caution in the winter especially when roads are slick, and those who are injured in a weather-related motor vehicle accident need to understand that they do have options to get the compensation they deserve.

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For more information on Chorney Sidhu Injury Lawyers please visit: [chorneylawyers.com](http://chorneylawyers.com)



**It's your crashiversary**

You are healing and that's worth celebrating every year! Take a moment and reflect at how far you have come today.  
**Never lose hope. Be proud of yourself. You are amazing!**

You have survived a lot and we are thinking of you today.

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## Pace Yourself Over the Holidays!

*Submitted by S. Dawne McKay*

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Remember that not everyone will be feeling the same as you over the holidays. Be honest and tell people what you want or what you do not want to do. Make it clear that some things aren't easy for you. Having coping strategies in place just in case you find yourself overwhelmed is important. Identify a place that you can go to decompress, and go there when needed.

It's important to try and find some quiet moments and to recognize your limits. Retreat to a bedroom or somewhere alone when noise levels are at their highest and pay attention to signs of fatigue. Try your best to get adequate sleep and prioritize self care this season.

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Post  
Crash  
Tip



POST CRASH TIP

FROM

S. DAWNE MCKAY  
AUTHOR - EDITOR - BLOGGER  
FOUNDER  
CRASH SUPPORT NETWORK



# Survivor Writes Open Letter to the Driver That Hit Their Car

Submitted by Brain Injury Wise

Dear Matthew,

My name is @braininjurywise and I was the one whose car you hit 9 years ago today. I don't remember anything about you only that you were driving a Honda Civic, and you offered that you could call your wife so she could bring a blanket for me to the crash scene. I know you lived in my neighbourhood too as you were leaving for work when you hit me. Did you go to work after the accident? I went to the hospital on a spinal board. I don't remember you ever checking in on me.

The road conditions were very icy that day, in fact they were the first icy conditions of the season. I don't remember the impact but all signs were pointing to you driving too fast for the conditions, and when you needed to stop you couldn't. That has happened to me too, I just luckily have never hit anyone as a result. I remember being really mad that you hit our car and when I tried to yell or speak, I couldn't.

Do you remember today too? Do you ever think about the accident, and what ever happened to me? I think about you. I wonder what job you have, if you have kids, how your life is generally going. Do you still live in my neighbourhood or have you moved? Do you wonder about my life too? Do you believe in God, or like the universe destined this accident to happen?

## My Life Was Forever Changed That Day

Well, my life was forever changed because of the accident. As a result of my brain injury, I was in bed for several months and then over 9 years have slowly managed to gain some skills back and learn how to live with my symptoms. I lost my 2 careers, lots of abilities, some friendships and lots of self-esteem. I had to deal with anxiety/depression, PTSD, fatigue, pain, sensory issues, dizziness, vision problems, speech and cognitive processing decline. I still have many of these but have had a lot of great rehabilitation professionals (and still do!) in my life over the years to help me.

While most of my symptoms are permanent, some have improved to a really manageable level. Like I used to be a triathlete, and it took me 8 years but I am now able to ride my bike around for short periods of time. Man, that was a good day. I have had some really good triumphs like that. I really wish I could tell you more about them. On the other hand, the most traumatic event about the accident was the lawsuit I launched in order to secure financing for my future/forever needs. I ended up getting about a 1/3

of what I normally would have earned at my job (which I loved incidentally). The abuse I withstood for that lawsuit by assessors and insurers has really contributed to my emotional issues but that's a story for another day.

## I Want You to Know How I Am Doing

The purpose of this letter is to update you as to how I'm doing. I don't know if you care or not, but I like to think you do and haven't completely forgotten about me. While I wasn't expecting this change in my life, and have had some really dark times as a result, I want you to know I don't harbor any resentment towards you. I feel it was an accident in every sense of the word. I know you didn't choose to hit me. And I have had some really great opportunities to learn about myself that I wouldn't have had otherwise, so, in a weird way, I thank you for that.

I often feel gratitude that I survived, and have developed a creative flow to help me with my trauma and grief. It would be nice to be able to show you some of my artwork. Anyway, I know our lives have been inextricably intertwined for life. I just wanted you to know I'm thinking of you today, and hope you are thinking of me.

[@braininjurywise](https://www.instagram.com/braininjurywise)

For more information on Brain Injury Wise please visit: [braininjurywise.com](https://braininjurywise.com) and we also encourage you to follow their story on instagram at [Brain Injury Wise](https://www.instagram.com/BrainInjuryWise).



# Tips to Prepare for Discharge

Submitted by S. Dawne McKay

Survivor  
Advice  
Piece



You may have mixed emotions when you are told that you are being discharged from a trauma hospital. You may feel ill-prepared and anxious to start the next phase of your rehabilitation and recovery. You will be unsure about your future and it's important that you are involved in the decision-making process about your discharge. Hospitals should develop a plan with you for your discharge, recovery and rehabilitation, and ongoing care. This is a good time to ask questions and raise any concerns you or your family, caregiver or friends may have.

## When speaking with hospital staff about your discharge:

- Find out the date and time of discharge.
- Make sure you understand everything you have to do before leaving hospital – this might include going over your hospital discharge plan, arranging any aids or equipment you need for your recovery, or filling a prescription.
- If you are going home, ask about anything you may need to help you recover there, such as walking aids or home help.
- Ask questions to ensure you have all the information you need.
- Ask what activities you can and cannot do once you get home, such as lifting, driving, and climbing stairs.
- Understand what the warning signs are that would mean you have to call a healthcare professional or return to hospital.
- Check if there are any follow-up appointments you need to make with a healthcare professional or at an outpatient clinic. Record any appointment dates in your phone or

calendar, along with any special instructions for these appointments. You will need a rehabilitation team in place.

## You must also:

- Make arrangements for someone to pick you up. Is your home going to be accessible?
- Make sure you have your house keys.
- It's important to remember to wear loose clothing and to take all of your belongings with you from your hospital room.
- If you have retained a personal injury lawyer, make sure you inform them that you are being discharged.

You may feel like you are not ready to go home when the healthcare professional tells you it is time. Perhaps you do not feel strong enough – mentally or physically. It's important to speak to your healthcare professional or the hospital social worker about your concerns. There are many options for support at home and programs to help you transition from hospital to home.

## If Recovery at Home Does Not Go as Planned

If you are feeling unwell once you get home or your recovery is not progressing as expected, arrange to see your specialist earlier than previously arranged or talk to your family doctor. It's important that you continue your care after you leave the hospital by taking any prescribed medications, arranging for services or equipment needed, and following up with your physician as recommended.



# MANY THANKS TO OUR 2023 SPONSORS!

We couldn't have done it without your support!



By sponsoring the *Sharing our Recovery Newsletter*, you are supporting the continued growth of this valuable free resource for crash survivors.

## Would you like to be part of Sharing Our Recovery?

### Articles/Stories:

We are always looking for articles or stories, and we would love to hear from you!

Want to share?

**Email:** [info@crashsupportnetwork.com](mailto:info@crashsupportnetwork.com)

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**Information:** [Crash Support Network Sponsorship](#)



### Meet Dawne McKay – Founder

S. Dawne McKay is the Founder of the Crash Support Network and continues to donate countless hours to her crash survivor community by sharing resources, highly informative articles, a quarterly newsletter and a blog that allows her to share her own personal journey as a crash survivor. Dawne works hard at bringing awareness to crash survivors through CSN's social media platforms and the online support group by sharing inspirational posts with survivors from all across the world. Dawne is also the author of the book, "Talk Crash to Me - What to Expect After Surviving a Motor Vehicle Collision and How to Manage Your Recovery" which is [available on Amazon](#).

**Our Mission is to raise awareness to the recovery journey that many people face after being affected by a motor vehicle crash and to provide online support and resources.**



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