

Krista & Doug

July 5, 2009 was a beautiful and sunny day.

Krista, Doug and their family were returning to Fort McMurray from a wonderful weekend in Edmonton. About 80 km south of Fort McMurray, Doug noticed an on-coming vehicle crossover into their lane headed directly for a head-on collision with the car in front of them. To avert the impending collision Doug steered towards the opposite, traffic-free lane but, while doing so, the other vehicle suddenly veered back into the lane and collided with the side of their van.

What had been a beautiful day suddenly turned into a nightmare. Krista's and Doug's mini-van was flung into the ditch where it rolled down an embankment. The van came to a rest on the passenger side and as Doug took stock of the situation he was sure there had to be a fatality. His father-in-law was conscious in the passenger seat, his 2 small children were hanging upside down in their car seats, his mother-in-law was in pain, and it appeared that both Krista and his brother-in-law were fatalities. Thankfully, this was not the case and all 7 survived the collision. Doug describes the aftermath as a war zone with severe traumas, blood and pain. Their van was totaled with the rear axle & hatch completely severed.



Krista Burke, Doug Pittman & family
Severely injured by fatigued driver

The totality of the collision has completely devastated this family. Krista and her mother, father and brother were taken into Northern Lights Regional Health Centre. Her mother had a punctured lung, internal injuries and a hematoma. Her brother had been knocked unconscious. Krista was injured the most seriously as she was sitting in the back of the van which received the biggest impact from the other vehicle. Her non-reclining seat was in a full horizontal position

from the impact that had torn & disabled her seatbelt and then pulled her and the broken belt backwards at great velocity. At the scene of the collision Krista's arm was severed metal under the full weight of the van. Krista has no memory of the impact but has vivid flashbacks of her bloodied hand being lifted out from the dirt and the nurse removing a necklace from her neck. In Emergency, Krista demanded that her husband bring the children to her to prove that they were alive.

One of the most amazing things that both Krista and Doug are grateful for were all the Good Samaritans who stopped to assist. A youth sports team returning from an event watched their children, 2 ladies held umbrellas for shade over the injured, others provided food, blankets and comfort. The First Responders arrived quickly.

The aftermath of the collision still affects the family today. Krista is unable to return to work in the foreseeable future because of the ongoing emotional and physical healing. During her convalescence, the children were sent to live with an aunt in Grande Prairie as Krista was unable to care for them and did not have family support within the community. Her mother, also injured, was unable to assist.

The collision has become Krista's life. She relives it every time she has to travel to Edmonton for another specialist appointment. She relives it through the lengthy legal process. And she sees the strain the collision has put on her family: Dylan (her son, age 7) has nightmares and is afraid his parents will die; her husband Doug must balance work, caring for his wife and raising their children; her mother, father & brother are all suffering emotionally as well.

The driver of the vehicle was charged \$2000 and received 6 demerit points. He fought the charges but after the 7th court appearance plead guilty. Fatigue is a form of impairment and yet many people choose to drive when they know they are too tired. As Doug puts it, "Why do they risk not getting home themselves or potentially stopping someone else from getting home safely? Our highways and roads are safe – it's driver behavior that's unsafe." Next time you're on the road and fatigued,

please pull over to prevent a tragedy.