



Safety Awareness Briefing

At SAT we believe that life stories on safe driving help to improve individual driving knowledge.

0620 this morning and I'm driving in pouring rain on the A280, a single carriageway in West Sussex. The road runs along the South Downs, contouring the hillsides, so there are multiple sweeping bends with a high bank to my left, and dropping away into the valley to my right. Under those conditions, I'd normally drive that road at about 45-50 mph. But this morning I thought, "I'm really early and in no rush", so I slowed to around 40. I'm wide awake, but relaxed and listening to a TED talk on my phone. I crest a rise on a left hand bend, and see a van heading straight towards me as he overtakes a line of traffic. I had no time to react, and even if I had, there was nowhere to go. Turn left? No - the high bank gives me nowhere to go. Swerve right and I plow head on into the line of traffic he's passing. He cuts back in with literally inches to spare. I am not embellishing this story, I promise you.

This is the closest shave I've had in many many years. If I had been driving at my normal pace there is absolutely no doubt we would have hit head on at a combined speed of over 100mph. Volvos are good, but even they can't change the basic laws of physics and kinetic energy.

I drive a lot, and have raced cars and bikes. I was trained as an advanced driver in the military by the very best. I pride myself on being a reasonable driver. But there was not a damn thing I could have done this morning. So people, be careful, drive defensively, and always leave in good time for your destination.