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The Risk

I'm driving on Route 35 in Stanish, going about 40 miles per hour. The passenger in my car touches my arm without my expectations and my automatic flinching reaction forced my arm to move the steering wheel, sending the car serving to the left. Luckily I was able to correct the car before I hit anyone. This frightening event was not the passengers fault, as they had done that before and it hadn't caused an involuntary movement from me. In this circumstance, I was perfectly alert and paying attention to the road and still almost crashed the car. However, this raises many concerning questions. What if this had happened 3 seconds earlier when a car was in the oncoming lane? What if I hadn't been fully paying attention to almost instantly correct the direction of the car? How would I have explained it if a collision had happened?

Not only are small distractions from passengers a problem, but so is speed and the desire of speed. Driving Oak Hill Road in Standish, especially in a low sports hatchback with a throaty exhaust really makes me want more and more. The twists, uphill, downhill and straightaways tempt me to cruise the whole thing at 70 mph, even hitting speeds in excess of 100 mph. Even with the windows rolled up and radio off, accidents can happen. If a deer jumped into the roadway, if a person was walking alongside the road, or even if I hit a wet patch of leaves, those grippy super sport tires wouldn't be so grippy anymore.

Distracted driving is a serious problem in Maine and is even easier to be a victim of than just texting and driving. The two previous examples were not due to crazy friends in the car or a text that

just couldn't wait to be responded to. They were either an example of stupidity or something spontaneous that couldn't be controlled, both of which having terrible consequences for the driver and the potential other party.

What if I had been texting? What if I had been talking on the phone? What if the passengers in my car were being crazy? My reflexive movement may have not been corrected so soon, and I could have smashed right into an oncoming car. Driving is all about risks, and nobody can control the actions others take, however "What if" questions can be asked when driving to determine how to be more focused or safe on the road.

Teens do not think of the consequences when driving. "If I do this will I be home safe tonight?" or "If I go too fast and pass an officer how much money will I be fined or how long will my license be taken?" Teens tend to go on impulse and do whatever is fun. Sure, this can be fun, but if worse comes to worse there can be some pretty significant consequences of "Only living once".