Remote Not In Traffic Surveillance Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Investigation
Dynamic Science, Inc. (DSI), Case Number DS09011
1983 Oldsmobile Cutlass Supreme
California
December 2008

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The crash investigation process is an inexact science which requires that physical evidence such as skid marks, vehicular damage measurements, and occupant contact points be coupled with the investigator's expert knowledge and experience of vehicle dynamics and occupant kinematics in order to determine the pre-crash, crash, and post-crash movements of involved vehicles and occupants.

Because each crash is a unique sequence of events, generalized conclusions cannot be made concerning the crashworthiness performance of the involved vehicle(s) or their safety systems.

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Background

This incident focused on the circumstances surrounding the deaths of three females in a parked 1983 Oldsmobile Cutlass Supreme 4-door sedan (**Figure 1**). The vehicle had been parked in a parking lot with its engine running for up to 14-1/2 hours. The area was snow covered. At some point between 2200 hours and 1230 hours the following day in December 2008, all three females died of accidental carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning.



Figure 1. Exemplar view of 1983 Cutlass Supreme

This incident was investigated by the county coroner's office. The office generated a coroner's record and a supplemental investigation report. This incident was not reported to the state as a traffic fatality.

This remote Not in Traffic Surveillance (NITS) CO poisoning investigation was identified by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) from a review of an internet news article. The article reported that three women were found dead in a vehicle parked near a ski resort and law enforcement officials suspected that they were victims of accidental CO poisoning. On February 25, 2009 DSI was sent the news article with instructions to obtain cooperation. The local police jurisdiction was contacted and they indicated that any reports on the incident would be generated by the coroner's office. The coroner was contacted on February 25, 2009 and a copy of the coroner's supplemental investigation was requested for each of the victims. On March 3, 2009 DSI obtained the investigation reports. The case was assigned on March 4, 2009. The following information was obtained from the internet news article and the investigation reports.

Summary

Incident Site

The incident occurred between 2200 hours and 1230 hours the following day in December 2008. According to news accounts, the temperatures were between -7 degrees C (20 degrees F) and -1 degrees C (30 degrees F). The winds were generally calm and there were reports that it was snowing. The police reported that the vehicle was covered with new fallen snow. The incident occurred in a parking lot for employee housing at a ski resort.

Incident

The Oldsmobile had been parked in a parking lot near a ski resort. The vehicle was parked in the first parking space in the lot, facing the building, and facing south. At approximately 1230 hours, a male passerby was helping a female motorist dig her vehicle out of the snow. That vehicle was located in the second space in the lot, adjacent to the Oldsmobile. After the vehicle in the second parking space backed out, the passerby noticed that the Oldsmobile was idling. He looked inside the vehicle and it looked as if the occupants were sleeping. He yelled at one of the occupants to

wake her but there was no response. He opened the passenger side door and checked the pulse of the front right seat occupant and found no pulse. He turned off the car engine because it was very warm inside the vehicle and then notified authorities. The first responder was a security officer associated with the ski resort. He reported that the driver was slumped over towards the center seat face down and had blood coming from her nose. The first row middle occupant was lying partially on top of the front right occupant with her right arm near the floor board. The first row right occupant was slumped inward towards the center of the vehicle behind the second row middle occupant.

Police and emergency personnel were notified by the security officer. The responding EMS personnel were unable to find any pulses and also noted that they felt rigor mortis in the bodies. They contacted the hospital who advised them to cease any resuscitation efforts.

When the investigators arrived they noted that there was 0.6 m (2 ft) of snow on the vehicle and 0.6-0.9 m (2-3 ft) of snow on the ground around the vehicle. They also noted that the vehicle's tail pipe was bent up under the wheel well and there was snow in the pipe.

The report indicated that the occupants were last seen at approximately 2200 hours the night before, and that they may have gone to their vehicle to consume alcohol since they were not allowed to do so in the housing unit.

The driver had a Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) of 0.035 and tested positive for cannabinoids. The front seat middle occupant had a BAC of 0.138 and tested positive for cannabinoids. The front seat right occupant had a BAC of 0.075. All three occupants were tested for CO exposure. The carboxyhemoglobin level was 90% for the driver, 74% for the front row middle occupant and 79% for the front row right occupant. Normal carboxyhemoglobin levels are up to 10%; deaths generally occur at levels greater than 40%.

The cause of death for all three occupants was inhalation of products of combustion. Time of death was not known but they were pronounced dead at 1338 hours.

CO Poisoning Discussion

CO is a colorless, odorless gas produced by burning material containing carbon. Red blood cells pick up CO quicker than they pick up oxygen. If there is a lot of CO in the air, the body may replace oxygen in the blood with CO. This process blocks oxygen from getting into the body, which can damage tissues and result in death. Symptoms of CO poisoning include: headache, dizziness, fatigue, nausea/vomiting, and altered mental status. For severe CO poisoning there may be neurological disorders, cardiovascular disorders, and respiratory disorders.

Vehicle Data - 1983 Oldsmobile Cutlass Supreme

The 1983 Oldsmobile Cutlass Supreme 4-door sedan was identified by the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN): 1G3AR69A7DMxxxxxx. According to the police report, the vehicle was brown and silver in color. The Oldsmobile was equipped with a 3.8-liter, 6-cylinder gas engine, automatic transmission, and rear wheel drive. There were no recalls located that related to the engine or exhaust system.

Occupant Demographics

Driver

Age/Sex:	21/Female
Height:	157 cm (62 in)
Weight:	49 kg (109 lbs)
Type of medical treatment:	None

Front row middle occupant

Age/Sex:	17/Female
Height:	183 cm (72 in)
Weight:	85 kg (187 lbs)
Type of medical treatment:	None

Front row right occupant

Age/Sex:	22/Female
Height:	160 cm (63 in)
Weight:	54 kg (119 lbs)
Type of medical treatment:	None

Injuries

<u>Driver</u>: Injuries obtained from autopsy report.

<u>Injury Mechanism Confidence Level</u>

Carbon monoxide 919206.5,0¹ CO inhalation Certain

poisoning

Front row middle occupant: Injuries obtained from autopsy report.

<u>Injury OIC Code</u> <u>Injury Mechanism</u> <u>Confidence Level</u>

Carbon monoxide 919206.5,0¹ CO inhalation Certain

poisoning

Front row right occupant: Injuries obtained from autopsy report.

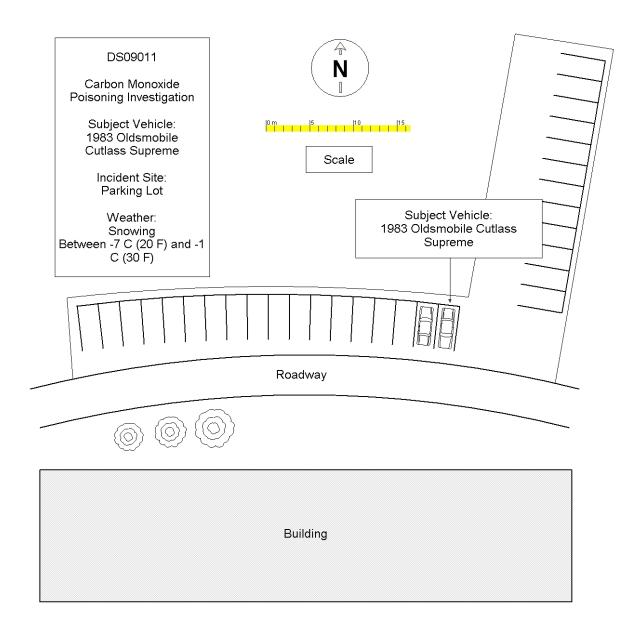
<u>Injury Mechanism Confidence Level</u>

Carbon monoxide 919206.5,0¹ CO inhalation Certain

poisoning

¹Severe (> 40 mg% caroxyhemoglobin)

Scene Diagram



Attachment 1. Data Forms

SCENE FORM

	SCENE INFORMATION
Case Number	7. Type of area in which crash occurred (Select all that apply)
	O Single family residential
IDENTIFICATION	O Row houses/townhouses
	O Multi family housing O Commercial
2. Date of Crash/	O Industrial
	O Rural O Unknown
3. Time of Crash	Olikilowii
	8. Driver exterior sightline obstructions
Code reported military time of crash.	(Select all that apply)
NOTE: Midnight = 2400	O None O Utility poles
Unknown = 9999	O Other vehicles O Signs O Building O Glare
	O Trees O Unknown
AMBIENT CONDITIONS	O Shrubbery O No driver present
4. Light Conditions	O Other (specify)
	9. Crash location
O Daylight O Dark	O Driveway O Road / street
O Dark but lighted	O Parking Lot O Roadside / shoulder
O Dawn O Dusk	O Sidewalk O Other (specify)
O Unknown	O Alley O Unknown O Intersection of driveway and sidewalk
- 4	·
5. Atmospheric Conditions (Select all that apply)	Non motorist sightline obstructions (Select all that apply)
O Clear-No adverse conditions O Cloudy	O None O Other vehicles
O Rain	O Building
O Snow O Fog, Smog, Smoke	O Trees O Shrubbery
O Sleet, Hail (freezing rain or drizzle)	O Utility poles
O Blowing Snow	O Signs
O Severe Crosswinds O Blowing Sand, Soil, Dirt	O Glare O Other (specify)
O Other (specify):	O Unknown
O Unknown	+ / - 11. Grade at parked position %
6. Temperature	· · · · — — —
O Below 0 degrees Celsius (Below 32 F)	12. Estimated distance from parked position to impact
O 1-10 degrees Celsius (33-50 F)	m
O >10-24 degrees Celsius (51-75 F) O Over 24 degrees Celsius (Over 75 F)	13. Estimated speed at impactm kmph
O Unknown	+/ -
	14. Grade at impact %
	15. Estimated distance from impact to vehicle final
	rest
	m
	Unknown = 999 Reference Items 11,12, 13, 14, 15

VEHICLE FORM

1. Case Number								
		VEHICLE IDEN	TIFICATION					
2. VIN	2. VIN							
3. Model Ye	ear							
4. Vehicle N	Make (specify	/):			_			
5. Vehicle N	Model (specif	y):			_			
		GLAZI	NG					
Location	Presence (check)	Status (select)	Clarity (select)	Tint (check)	Glazing Obstructions (specify if present)			
Windshield		Fixed / Closed / Open / Partially Open / Unknown	Clear / Hazy / Very Dirty / Unknown					
LF		Fixed / Closed / Open / Partially Open	Clear / Hazy / Very Dirty					
RF		Fixed / Closed / Open / Partially Open	Clear / Hazy / Very Dirty					
2 nd Left		Fixed / Closed / Open / Partially Open	Clear / Hazy / Very Dirty					
2 nd Right		Fixed / Closed / Open / Partially Open	Clear / Hazy / Very Dirty					
3 rd Left		Fixed / Closed / Open / Partially Open	Clear / Hazy / Very Dirty					
3 rd Right		Fixed / Closed / Open / Partially Open	Clear / Hazy / Very Dirty					
Backlight		Fixed / Closed / Open / Partially Open	Clear / Hazy / Very Dirty					
Left Backlight		Fixed / Closed / Open / Partially Open	Clear / Hazy / Very Dirty					
Right Backlight		Fixed / Closed / Open / Partially Open	Clear / Hazy / Very Dirty					
Roof		Fixed / Closed / Open / Partially Open	Clear / Hazy / Very Dirty					
Other (specify)		Fixed / Closed / Open / Partially Open	Clear / Hazy / Very Dirty					
		TIRE D	ATA					
6. Vehicle Manufacturer Recommended Tire Size								
7. LF Tire Size 9. RF Tire Size								
8. LR Tire Size 10. RR Tire Size								

Seats / Head Restraint Data					
Seat Position	Seat Type (Select from below)	Head Restraint (Check if available)	Head Restraint Adjustment (select)	NOTES:	
Front Left			Full Down / Mid / Full Up		
Front Middle			Full Down / Mid / Full Up		
Front Right			Full Down / Mid / Full Up		
2 nd Left			Full Down / Mid / Full Up		
2 nd Middle			Full Down / Mid / Full Up		
2 nd Right			Full Down / Mid / Full Up		
3 rd Left			Full Down / Mid / Full Up		
3 rd Middle			Full Down / Mid / Full Up		
3 rd Right			Full Down / Mid / Full Up		

Seat Type codes:

0 = No seat or seat folded down

1 = Bucket

2 = Bucket w/ folding back

3 = Bench

4 = Bench with folding back cushions

5 = Bench w/ folding back

6 = Split bench w/ separate back cushions

7 = Split bench w/ separate folding back

8 = Pedestal (i.e. column supported)

9 = Box mounted (i.e. van type)

10= Other seat type (specify)

99= Unknown seat type

VEHICLE MEASUREMENTS					
Clearance Heights	Measurements (all from ground, and in centimeters	NOTES			
Beltline					
Top of trunk/tailgate					
Bottom of bumper					
Trailer hitch (if applicable)					
Undercarriage					
Sway bar					
Axle					
Differential					
Other (specify):					
Sensor Height (if equipped)					
Camera Height (if equipped)					

Back Up / Parking Aid Form

1. Case Number	Video image quality under scene lighting conditions
PARKING AID PRESENCE 2. Type of backing/parking aid present	O None present O Good O Average O Poor (specify): O Unknown
O OEM camera O OEM ultrasonic/radar sensor O OEM combination camera-ultrasonic/radar sensor O OEM Fresnel lens O OEM interior mirrors O Aftermarket camera O Aftermarket ultrasonic/radar sensor O Aftermarket combination camera-ultrasonic radar sensor O Aftermarket Fresnel lens O Aftermarket interior mirrors O Other (specify):	8. Was the camera functioning properly O None present O Yes O No, poor image quality due to glare O No, poor image quality due to atmospheric conditions O No, camera turned off O No, camera inoperable O Unknown ULTRASONIC/RADAR SENSOR Specify object detection range on diagram
CAMERA INFORMATION	System make/model
Specify field of view measurements on diagram	
3. System make/model 4. Video monitor type O None present O LCD (color) O CRT (black & white) O Unknown 5. Video display size cm (Diagonal) 6. Camera location O None present O Bumper O License plate O Trilleto (Latab Trunk	10. Auditory warning illumination O No sensor present O Yes O No O Unknown 11. Number of sensors 12. Sensor locations (Select all that apply) O No sensor present O Left bumper O Center bumper O Right bumper O License plate area O Tailgate/Hatch/Trunk
O Tailgate/Hatch/Trunk O Other (specify):	13. Was warning system functioning properly O No sensor present O Yes, system alerted driver O No, system did not alert driver O No, system turned off O No, system inoperable O Unknown

Spe	ecial Crash Investigations – Not In Traffic Surveill	ance:	: Ba	ck Up	Parkin	g Aid I	Form	Page 2
14.	Did driver react to warning							
	O No sensor present O Yes O No O Unknown							
15.	Did driver report common false warnings							
	O No sensor present O Yes O No O Unknown							

DRIVER FORM

Case Number	10. Driver entry interruption (Select all that apply)
DRIVER PROFILE 2. Driver's Age 99 = Unknown 3. Driver's Sex O Male O Female O Unknown 4. Driver's Height 999 = Unknown	O Direct trip from building to vehicle O Loaded items into vehicle O Spoke with family O Spoke with neighbors O Spoke with contacted nonmotorist O Return trip (backing into driveway/lot) O Other (specify): O N/A Unknown 11. Purpose of backing
5. Driver's Weight 999 = Unknown 6. Driver eyewear worn (Select all that apply) O None O Eyeglasses O Sunglasses O Contacts O Unknown	O Leaving parking space in parking lot O Backing onto roadway from driveway O Entering parking space in parking lot O Backing into driveway from roadway O Other (specify): O N/A Unknown 12. Where was driver going Description:
7. Driver vision deficiency condition (Select all that apply) O None O Near sighted O Far sighted O Astigmatism O Other (specify) O Unknown	13. Driver in a hurry O Yes N/A O No Unknown O Unknown 14. How did driver check behind (rear area of vehicle)
8. Non motorist's relationship to driver O No relationship O Child O Grandchild O Sibling O Neighbor O Friend O Other (specify): O Unknown DRIVER ACTIONS	after vehicle entry (Select all that apply) O Did not look O Checked mirrors O Turned right and looked back O Turned left and looked back Viewed Camera Listened for auditory/visual warning from system
9. Driver approach to vehicle for entry From left front O From left O From left rear O From right rear O From right front O Circled vehicle O Return trip (backing into driveway/lot) O Other (specify): O N/A O Unknown	O Other (specify): N/A Unknown 15. Estimated time between vehicle entry and start of backing O 0-10 Seconds O 11-30 Seconds O 31-60 Seconds Unknown

	January Commence		
16.	What direction was the driver looking during backing maneuver	19.	Did driver see struck non motorist prior to impact (Select all that apply)
	(Select all that apply) O Straight ahead O Right O Left O Rearward		O No, never saw non motorist O Saw non motorist prior to entering vehicle O Saw non motorist after entering vehicle O Other (specify): Unknown
	O At object inside the car	00	
	O At mirrors O Other (specify):	20.	Est time between start of backing and impact
	O N/A		O <2 or = 1 second O 2-5 seconds
17	Unknown Was the driver distracted during back up		O 6-10 seconds
17.	maneuver		O > 10 seconds
	(Select all that apply)		O N/A Unknown
	O No non-driving activities External		Driver interior sightline obstructions (Select all that apply)
	O Looking at other vehicles O Looking at other non motorist O Looking at intended turn destination		O Pillar O Other occupant O Headrest O Other (specify)
	O External focus, not specified		O Cargo O Unknown None
	O Other external focus (specify): Internal	22.	Recent experience driving this vehicle
	 O Looking at other occupant O Talking to passenger O Dialing phone O Talking on phone O Listening to radio/cd/portable playback device O Adjusting radio/cd player 		O More than 10 times the last three months O 6-10 times the last three months O 2-5 times the last three months O Less than 2 times the last three months O First time driving this vehicle O N/A
	O Adjusting climate controls O Using a device/controls integral to vehicle	23.	Unknown Frequency of driving in this parking lot/driveway
	(specify): O Reading/adjusting navigation system O Eating or drinking O Smoking related O Retrieving fallen object (specify): O Internal focus, not specified O Focused on other internal object		O Daily O Weekly O Several times a month O Monthly O Rarely O First time in lot/driveway O N/A Unknown
	(specify):	24	Driver Impairment
	O N/A Unknown	۷٦.	(Select all that apply)
18.	Driver avoidance actions prior to impact (Select all that apply)		O No drugs or alcohol present O Alcohol present (specify BAC):
	O None O Braking		O Drugs present (specify):O Unknown
	O Steering left O Steering right	25.	Source of alcohol/drug results
	O Accelerating O Other (appoint):		O Police reported
	O Other (specify):O N/A		O Medical record O Other (specify)
	Unknown		O Not Tested
			Unknown if tested

Non Motorist Form

1. Case Number	11. Non-motorist motion
NON-MOTORIST PROFILE	O Not moving O Walking slowly O Walking rapidly
2. Non-motorist's Age Years 99 = Unknown	S O Running or joggingO Skipping/Hopping/JumpingO Falling/Stumbling/Rising
3. Non-motorist's Sex O Male O Female O Unknown	O On skates/skateboard O On bike/scooter O Other (specify): O Unknown
4. Non-motorist's Height cm 999 = Unknown	12. Non-motorist approach relative to rear of vehicle
5. Non-motorist's Weight kg999 = Unknown6. Medical outcome	O Stationary O From left O From right O From behind O Other (specify):
O Not injured O ER only O Hospitalized 1-4 days	O Unknown 13. Non-motorist first avoidance action
O Hospitalized 5 days or moreO Treatment laterO FatalO Unknown	O No avoidance actions O Stopped O Accelerated pace O Ran away (along vehicle path)
7. Source of most severe injury Bumper O Tire O Undercarriage O Other Specify: O Ground	O Jumped O Turned away from vehicle O Turned toward vehicle and braced O Dove or fell away from vehicle O Other (specify): O Unknown
O N/A Unknown	14. Non-motorist primary focus of attention
8. Non-motorist impairment (Select all that apply) O No drugs or alcohol present O Positive for alcohol (specify BAC): O Positive for drugs (specify): O Unknown	O Striking vehicle O Play object O Person O Surrounding traffic O Animal O Handheld electronic (phone, MP3 player, etc.)
Source of alcohol/drug results Police reported Medical Report	O Other Object (specify) O Unknown 15. Were any other Non-motorists present?
O Other (specify) O Not Tested O Unknown if tested	(Select all that apply) O Alone
NON-MOTORIST ACTIONS	O One adult present O One other child present
10. Non-motorist attitude	O Multiple adults present O Multiple children present O Unknown
O Standing O On skates/skateboard O Bending at waist O On bike/scooter O Sitting O Other (specify) O Crouching O Unknown O Kneeling	O Ulikilowii

NON MOTORIST CLOTHING

NOTES:

White

• Specify Color, Fabric and Texture/Weight for outermost layer only

Other (specify)

- Indicate "NONE" if applicable
- Available codes:

<u>Colors</u>		<u>Fabrics</u>	<u>Textures</u>	<u>Weights</u>
Black	Charcoal gray	Natural	Soft	Heavy
Lt gray/silver	Brown	Synthetic	Slick	Medium
Gold/tan	Purple	Blend	Coarse	Light
Dark blue	Light blue			_
Dark green	Light green			
Maroon	Red			
Orange	Yellow			

	Clothing	Color	Fabric	Texture	Weight
H E A D W E A R	Hat				
	Helmet				
	Hood				
	Other (specify):				
U P P E R	Short Sleeve				
	Long Sleeve				
	Light Jacket				
	Heavy Jacket				
O D	Other (Specify):				
Y					
L O	Shorts				
W E R	Pants				
	Shoes				
В О	Other (specify):				
D Y					