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Being behind the wheel of a car is perhaps the most dangerous situation in which we find ourselves during off-duty hours. Before you think I'm exaggerating, let me tell you about a crash I saw when I was a student naval aviator in Florida.

An impatient driver of a convertible tried to pass a logging truck. He swerved off the road to avoid oncoming traffic, rolled three or four times, slammed into another car, and propelled it into the parking lot of a gas station. The crash lasted only 15 seconds.

I pulled off the road just beyond the convertible. Inside were two fellow student naval aviators strapped into the front seat.

From Normal to Deadly in Fifteen Seconds

When I got close to them, I could see they were dead. Both of their necks were broken. The passenger's right leg had been crushed by the door opening and closing.

The other car, only a few feet away, faced the opposite direction. Its front end was compressed nearly to the steering column.

The young man in it was seriously injured. The 100-mile-per-hour-combined-speed impact had forced him into the dashboard and steering wheel. His face and right knee were crushed. He was breathing through a small hole in the lower part of his jaw.

It's been 11 years since I saw this crash. Hundreds of times since then, I have thought about these people and about how suddenly a seemingly normal situation can turn deadly.

I see people running yellow lights, passing other cars with seconds to spare before hitting oncoming vehicles, or speeding past me on the interstate—all trying to save time. After knowing what can happen when an impatient driver tries to save a few seconds, ask yourself if saving time is that important. Is it worth the risk?