

# Crash response causes unnecessary 'shock'

## **Dear Editor:**

On Monday morning, traffic had slowed as I neared the multiple merges just before the Ironworkers Memorial Second Narrows Crossing.

I expected to see the common cars-kissing scenario at this zero-merge-lane disaster zone but was instead surprised to see a vehicle that had spun and crashed into the railing on the Main Street on-ramp.

The driver and her daughter were standing on the sidewalk looking forlornly at their wrecked car, the mother on her cellphone likely calling 9-1-1. Traffic from the Main Street on-ramp was making its way around the damaged vehicle, which was only partially blocking the on-ramp lane.

I later spoke to numerous people who were subsequently trapped on the North Shore after emergency responders blocked off the

Main Street on-ramp and the adjacent flow-through lane onto the bridge. Traffic in every direction was gridlocked with lineups stretching kilometres in all directions. One individual, who finally passed the accident scene after almost two hours stuck in traffic, observed responders — police, fire, tow truck driver, etc. — clustered near the damaged vehicle, which still hadn't been removed!

In human physiology the body sometimes over-responds to physical injury in a reaction known as "shock." To preserve life, the body shuts down blood circulation to everything except the vital organs. Shock is characterized by pale, cool and sweaty skin because the extremities are starved of oxygen. If untreated, this initially life-saving response can progress and lead to death. When treating an injured patient, you treat the injury and you

treat for shock.

The protracted over-response by emergency personnel to this single-car accident resulted in a shock-like crippling injury across the North Shore. The vehicle was likely a \$15-20,000 ICBC write-off, but the cost of tens of thousands of people unnecessarily trapped for hours in their cars runs to hundreds of thousands of dollars.

All that was necessary was to put out some traffic cones and a flag person to direct traffic around the damaged vehicle — to keep rush hour traffic flowing — to keep the North Shore alive. The vehicle should have been removed later, after rush hour.

The response caused far greater damage than the accident. We need to start "treating for shock."

**Don Johnson**  
**North Vancouver**