U.S. Department of Transportation

news:

Office of Public Affairs

Washington, D.C. 20590

FOR RELEASE TUESDAY
August 2, 1977

NHTSA-65-77 (ER)
Tel. 202-426-9550

ODOMETER RULES TIGHTENED

Sale or transfer of a motor vehicle will require more detailed information to a prospective buyer about its mileage, effective Jan. 1, 1978, the U. S. Department of Transportation announced today.

The department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), has issued an amended regulation to increase the effectiveness of the federal law against odometer tampering and fraud. The amendment is in response to a petition for rulemakeing submitted by the National Automobile Dealers' Association.

An odometer is the numerically calibrated device that generally is a component of a motor vehicle's speedometer, and automatically registers cumulative miles travelled.

"This amendment will solve several problems that dealers and consumers have had with the old disclosure statement," said NHTSA administrator Joan Claybrook. "The primary purpose of the statement is to inform a potential buyer of the car's mileage as an index to the condition and value of the vehicle. The new regulation will clarify that statement, close existing loopholes, and encourage states to include mileage information on their certificates of title."

The original regulation requiring odometer disclosure statements was issued under the authority of the Motor Vehicle Information and Cost Savings Act. To clarify that statement, the following changes have been made:

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- In addition to stating the mileage the vehicle has been driven and certifying that the mileage is actual, or that the mileage is unknown, the seller must also state whether the odometer reflects the amount of mileage in excess of 99,999 miles.

- The form has been substantially enlarged by the addition of certifications that the odometer was either not altered, or altered for repair or replacement purposes only.

- The buyer, like the seller, will now be required to include his name, address, and signature, acknowledging receipt of the statement.

- Because of the gradual conversion to the metric system, provision has been made for recording odometer readings that are expressed in kilometers.

- The last license plate number will no longer be required to be listed among the information identifying the vehicle.

Under the previous regulation, states were permitted to use their certificates of titles as disclosure statements, provided the titles contained all of the information required on the federal form. Because of the limited space available this requirement precluded most states from utilizing this provision.

One of the most important aspects of this regulation is that states would be permitted to shorten the odometer provisions if they are included on the title. Any states that want to take advantage of this provision will be required to obtain prior approval of their titles by the NHTSA.

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U.S. Department of Transportation

Office of Public Affairs

FOR RELEASE WEDNESDAY
August 3, 1977

CONSUMER ADVISORY

NHTSA -- 66-77 (IHC)
Tel No. (202) 426-0670

FIAT INVESTIGATION

A safety investigation of chassis rusting in 1970-1974 Fiat 850, 124 and 128 automobiles was announced today by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

The department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), cited 71 complaints it has received about chassis deterioration due to rusting in the three Fiat models. The corrosion resembles a problem for which the Company recalled 40,000 1971-74 Fiat 128 models in 1974. NHTSA will be re-examining the 128s (many were not brought in when the recall was announced) as well as the 850s and 124s.

NHTSA Administrator Joan Claybrook said these Fiat models seem to corrode in the same manner as the recalled models. "In many cases," she noted, "advanced corrosion of vital chassis elements goes undetected until the cars actually become dangerous."

Corrosion damage has been reported in suspension components, wheel attaching points, steering components and floor pans which support the seats.

More than 260,000 Fiats were sold in the U.S. between 1970 and 1974. Although many have been junked or repurchased by Fiat, the majority are still in use and may be subject to the corrosion damage.

Any owners experiencing this problem are urged to report it to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Office of Defects Investigation, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Washington, D.C. 20590.

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U.S. Department of Transportation
news:
Office of Public Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20590

CONSUMER ADVISORY

FOR RELEASE MONDAY
August 29, 1977

NHTSA -- 70-77 (IHC)
Tel. (202) 426-0670

BRITISH LEYLAND INVESTIGATIONS

Two new safety investigations involving cars manufactured by British Leyland between 1969 and 1977 were announced today by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

The first investigation concerns windshield wiper malfunctions in 1969 through 1977 Triumph Spitfire, TR-6, TR-7 and Stag automobiles. Owner complaints received by both British Leyland and the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) report failures of the wipers while in use. To date, 128 complaints have been reported.

The second investigation concerns lighting system failures in 1970 through 1977 Triumph Spitfire, TR-6 and TR-7 cars. The suspected defect is in the master light switch controlling the headlights, taillights, instrument panel lights and parking lights. Fifty-nine complaints have been received by British Leyland and NHTSA reporting the lights failed to go on.

The agency estimates there are 185,000 vehicles involved in each investigation. There have been no accidents or injuries reported as a result of either problem. The agency, however, is requesting owners who have experienced these failures to report them to: NHTSA, Office of Defects Investigation, 400 Seventh Street, SW, Washington D.C. 20590. Owners may also report by calling the agency's auto safety hotline at (800) 424-9393 (Washington metro area 426-0123).

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U.S. Department of Transportation
news:
Office of Public Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20590

FOR RELEASE WEDNESDAY
August 31, 1977

NHTSA -- 60-77 (HP)
Tel. 202-426-9550

DOT CONSIDERS RULES FOR TRUCK UNDERRIDE PROTECTION

The U.S. Department of Transportation is considering new safety regulations to provide better rear-end protection on heavy trucks and prevent underriding in accidents with passenger vehicles.

The department said present requirements should be reexamined because the problem of rear underride accidents is likely to become more severe as automobiles become smaller and are used in greater numbers.

In an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking issued jointly by the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), and the Bureau of Motor Carrier Safety, a division of the Federal Highway Administration, the department called for comments and data on possible revisions to the existing regulations.

An existing regulation addresses the problem of rear underride (Section 393.86 of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations) but applies only to commercial vehicles operated in interstate or foreign commerce and has not been changed in 25 years.

The question now is whether these rear-end protective requirements are adequate and should be extended to additional vehicles. Congressional interest is high as evidenced by the oversight hearings held on this aspect of auto-truck crash safety on March 16, 1977 by the Senate Commerce Committee. And the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) recently petitioned for more stringent rear-end protection than currently required by DOT.

Section 393.86 currently requires every commercial vehicle, except truck tractors, pole trailers, and towaway trucks, to be equipped with a rear-end protection device constructed in such a manner that the clearance from the ground does not exceed 30 inches with the vehicle unloaded; that the rear of the vehicle does not extend more than 24 inches beyond the device and that its width is not less than 18 inches inboard from each side.

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The principal reason for issuing the advance notice is the need to reassess the requirements of the current regulation and to reassess the need for a federal motor vehicle safety standard.

The imposition of more stringent requirements for rear underride protection for trucks weighing more than 10,000 pounds was first considered in 1967, and again in 1969 and 1970 by the NHTSA. The agency concluded in June 1971, however, that the benefits achievable by improved underride devices were outweighed by the cost of implementing the requirements.

When a passenger car collides with the rear-end of a heavy truck, the front end of the car can penetrate under the rearmost structure of the heavy vehicle. The result can be serious injury to, or death of, occupants of the passenger vehicle. Engineering changes in the design and manufacture of heavy vehicles may reduce the severity of these accidents.

Information available from NHTSA's Fatal Accident Reporting System and State Accident Summary data indicate the incidence of automobile rear-end collisions with trucks may be as high as 40,000 collisions annually, and result in as many as 200 to 300 fatalities and more than 8,000 injuries. The extent to which underride protection might reduce the severity of the problem has not been determined precisely.

The current federal regulation covers only commercial vehicles engaged in interstate commerce, and only 30 states have adopted Section 393.86 as an intrastate requirement. The department said issuance of a federal standard by the NHTSA could extend underride protection criteria to all trucks and trailers manufactured after the effective date of the standard.

With respect to research on this problem, a few studies have been directly associated with vehicle penetration into the rear of heavy vehicles. The recent IIHS study is the latest.

The NHTSA completed a study in 1971 entitled "Underride/Override of Automobile Front Structures in Intervehicular Collisions." That study, conducted for the federal safety agency by Calspan, Inc. of Buffalo, N. Y., recommended that underride guard to ground clearance should not exceed 24 inches and preferably 18 inches for smaller cars.

Currently, the Federal Highway Administration and the NHTSA are formulating a new research effort to establish the level of rear underride protection needed to reduce injuries and fatalities.

Those persons who wish to comment on the advance notice should do so by Nov. 30, 1977 by writing to the docket room of the Bureau of Motor Carrier Safety, Room 3402, 400 Seventh St., SW, Washington, D. C. 20590.

All communications received will be considered before any action is taken to propose revisions to the present requirements for underride protection.

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U.S. Department of Transportation

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Office of Public Affairs

Washington, D.C. 20590

FOR RELEASE THURSDAY
September 1, 1977

NHTSA -- 72-77 (HP)
Tel. 202-426-9550

DOT WARNS MOTORISTS ABOUT LABOR DAY TRAFFIC

The U. S. Department of Transportation, estimating that between 590 and 750 people may die in traffic accidents over the Labor Day weekend, urged the nation's motorists today to drive with extra care during the holiday period.

The projected death toll for the last weekend of the summer season, which begins at 6 p.m. Friday and ends at 12 midnight Monday, was forecast by the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

Joan Claybrook, administrator of the federal safety agency, urged motorists to redouble their efforts to observe traffic safety rules, with special emphasis on the 55 mile-per-hour national speed limit.

"That's an excellent prescription for any time of the year," she noted, "but particularly pertinent on a weekend when traffic densities are expected to break all records."

Ms. Claybrook also suggested that motorists guard against drinking alcoholic beverages when driving and called on all vehicle occupants to use the safety belts available in almost all cars.

"Most Americans still do not realize the tremendous life-giving value of safety belts," she said. "With auto crashes the largest killer of young people in this country and the leading cause of paraplegia and epilepsy, it is foolhardy for people not to take the simple step of buckling up."

The Transportation Department also announced that traffic fatalities in the United States for the first seven months of 1977 are running a fraction below the corresponding period of a year ago.

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The number of persons killed in traffic accidents through July 31 is estimated at 25,280, or 61 fewer than the 25,341 deaths recorded during the January through July period of 1976.

For the second straight month, however, the nation's traffic fatalities showed an increase over the same period a year ago. Traffic accidents in July claimed 4,759 lives, an increase of 3.7 percent over the 4,590 who died as a result of accidents in July 1976.

The totals are based on preliminary figures reported to the NHTSA by the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

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U.S. Department of Transportation
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Office of Public Affairs
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CONSUMER ADVISORY

FOR RELEASE TUESDAY
September 6, 1977

NHTSA 73-77 (BMA)
Tel. (202) 426-0670

INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER RECALLS 76,000 HEAVY TRUCKS FOR STEERING DEFECT

A recall involving an estimated 76,000 of the 1968 through 1974 International Harvester, heavy duty, cab-over engine truck tractors for correction of a defect in the steering system, was announced today by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

The recall is the result of an inquiry made by the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), based on a report from the Federal Highway Administration's Bureau of Motor Carrier Safety. The report indicated that 15 tractors out of a total of 210 owned by one trucking company had to have modifications made to their steering assemblies to correct defects which could result in loss of steering.

Allegedly, the bolt used to secure the steering column shaft to the yoke assembly is too small. This precludes a tight fit and permits movement which eventually wears the bolt, allowing the steering column shaft to pull out of the yoke. When this occurs, the driver is without steering control.

Although the NHTSA has no reports of accidents or injuries resulting from this problem, it is aware of one incident where failure occurred while the vehicle was in motion and, although steering control was lost, the driver managed to stop the vehicle safety.

Joan Claybrook, NHTSA Administrator, said that "loss of steering in a moving vehicle is always a major problem, but loss of steering in heavy vehicles could result in a major highway catastrophe." She urged the manufacturer to expedite the recall and repair of these units.

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FOR RELEASE WEDNESDAY
September 7, 1977

NHTSA -- 69-77 (BMA)
Tel. (202) 426-0670

DEFECT INVESTIGATORY CASES REPORT

The U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) issued its latest Defect Investigatory Cases Report today, listing all investigations opened or terminated between February and May, 1977. The report also includes a complete listing of all NHTSA defect investigations in progress as of May 31.

The federal safety agency report lists nine new investigations opened during the period, and seven which were terminated. It also lists a total of 56 active investigations, including four in which an initial or final defect determination has been made. Of the latter, NHTSA findings have been disputed by manufacturers in three cases and are currently in litigation.

One of the newly-opened investigations, Case C7-10, concerns the alleged failure of the front stabilizer bar on 1971 through 1974 and 1976 through 1977 Mercury Capri vehicles. The front stabilizer bar is a component of the vehicle suspension system. Its principal function is to control vehicle tendency to roll or lean in cornering maneuvers. It also controls the fore and aft movements of the front wheels. Failure of the stabilizer bar could result in the front wheels folding back against the fender wells, with resulting loss of vehicle control. This investigation involves 452,870 vehicles produced during the 1971 through 1976 model years, plus the 1977 models which have just been introduced.

Case C7-11 concerns the possibility of engine compartment fires in 1974 Porsche model 914 vehicles. It involves an estimated 16,000 vehicles which are equipped with an electronic fuel injector system that sprays fuel, under high pressure, into the flow of air entering the engine's combustion chamber. Owner complaints allege that fuel leaks from the pressurized fuel supply system allow fuel and vapors to collect in the engine compartment. Reportedly, ignition of fumes is caused by high voltage ignition wire leakage or by engine backfire through the air cleaner.

Since this investigation was opened, the manufacturer has recalled all 1970-1974 Porsche Model 914 vehicles imported into the United States for correction of this problem.

Case C7-12 involves an estimated 75,000 Honda GL 1000 and CB 750F motorcycles equipped with disc brakes on both the front and rear wheels, and concerns the lack of braking capability when operating in the rain.

Alleged shattering of non-padded plastic instrument panels on 1975-1977 Ford Econoline and Club Wagons is the subject of another investigation (C7-13). It was opened in response to two reports of noncollision accidents and one low-speed collision accident in which it was alleged that the plastic instrument panels shattered, leaving sharp edges which could lacerate and puncture vehicle occupants. The investigation involves an estimated 192,053 vehicles.

Since opening this investigation, the manufacturer has notified NHTSA of his intent to recall some 250,000 of these vehicles for the installation of instrument panel pads.

Also opened was an investigation (C7-14) involving an estimated 370,200 Volkswagen vehicles of the following models: 1975-1976 Rabbit and Scirocco; 1974-1975 Dasher; 1973-74-75 Audi; 1975 Type I sedans (Beetle); and 1976 Type II vehicles (Vans). All these models are equipped with similar throttle control systems. The investigation is based on owner complaints that design weakness of the system leads to broken throttle cables, with loss of control over vehicle speed.

The power brake booster on 2.2 million 1976 General Motors vehicles is the subject of another new investigation. This case (C7-21) involves certain 1976 Chevrolets, Pontiacs, Oldsmobiles, Cadillacs, Buicks, and GMC trucks, and concerns failure of the power brake booster due to gasoline vapor condensing in the booster can. The condensing of vapors into liquid gasoline can cause the booster diaphragm to deteriorate and rupture, with a consequent loss of power brake assist and the necessity for the driver to use abnormally high brake pedal forces to stop the vehicle.

Subsequent to the opening of case C7-21, NHTSA received official notice from General Motors that the company would recall the vehicles to install a special charcoal fuel filter in the vacuum booster line. The investigation is continuing to determine if additional vehicles should be recalled.

An investigation (C7-22) concerning stalling problems in 1975-1977 Chrysler Corp. Darts, Valiants, Aspens, and Volares was also opened. An estimated one million vehicles are subject to this investigation.

Toyota's 1969-1972 Corona Mark II models also became the subject of an investigation. This investigation (C7-23) concerns the possibility of electrical fires in the central console of vehicles with automatic transmissions, and involves an estimated 100,000 vehicles.

Subsequent to opening this investigation, Toyota notified NHTSA of its intent to recall 134,000 vehicles because of this problem.

Case C7-24 involves fan blade breakage in Ford 1970-1977 passenger cars and light trucks equipped with "flex-fans". The flex-fan is an engine cooling fan that has flexible blades that flex backward and flatten out when fan rotation speed increases. When the blades break, they are propelled at great velocity and can cause serious injury to individuals working on the vehicles with the hood open and the engine running, and to individuals standing nearby. The number of vehicles equipped with flex-fans has not been determined; however, over 6,200,000 fans of this type were shipped to Ford assembly plants for use on 1970-1977 Ford passenger cars.

After the opening of this investigation, Ford announced that it would recall approximately 400,000 vehicles equipped with flex-fans. These include 1972 model Lincolns, Ford Torinos, and Mercury Montegos equipped with air conditioning and 302, 351, and 400 CID engines. Subsequently, the manufacturer announced the recall of more than 700,000 additional 1976 and 1977 model vehicles. The investigation continues to determine if additional vehicles should be recalled.

NHTSA Administrator Joan Claybrook said that "because of our concern for the safety of the motoring public, we have already issued Consumer Advisories to alert vehicle owners of the possibility of these problems and precautions to be observed, and to request reports from consumers who have experienced any of these problems."

During the reporting period, seven investigations were terminated:

Case IR 161 involved the alleged failure of the power brake vacuum in 1965 to 1971 General Motors, Ford Motor Co., Chrysler Corp., and American Motors Corp. vehicles. The administrator has dismissed the initial safety defect determination proceeding against GM and the investigative file is closed. The subcases involving AMC, Ford, and Chrysler were closed on May 19, 1975.

Case 190.009 involved the alleged overloading of the suspension systems on 1965 through 1970 travel trailers manufactured by the Monitor Coach Company. The case was terminated because the company recalled the vehicles for repair.

Case C4=15 involved the alleged failure of the air conditioner blower relay with the possibility of melting wires and electrical fires on 1969-1970 Cadillacs manufactured by the General Motors Corp. Case C4-20 involved alleged unsatisfactory performance of the hood latch system in 1971 Toyota Coronas and Corollas. In both these cases, information developed was not sufficient to warrant further investigative effort. Information collected during these investigations is available for public viewing in the NHTSA public files.

Case C6=19 involved the alleged failure of the chassis drive train and brake on the 1974 Tri=Sport, SL series, three-wheeled motorcycles manufactured by Alsport, Inc. The NHTSA had received reports of accidents and injuries allegedly due to wheel separations, control arm separations, and chain failures. The case was closed because Alsport had ceased manufacturing operations, had entered bankruptcy proceedings, and thus was unable to fulfill any notification and remedy obligations that are required by the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1966. The NHTSA had considered notifying individual owners of these vehicles of these problems, but the Alsport files did not contain the necessary list of consumer names. The federal safety agency did publish a Consumer Advisory to alert owners of these vehicles.

Case 287 involved the alleged failure of front wheel spindles on 1968 to 1970 Ford Galaxie vehicles. This problem could result in the sudden loss of a wheel. In Dec. 1976 the NHTSA made an initial defect determination in this case. The case was closed when the Ford Motor Company recalled 1969 Ford and Mercury model vehicles, used or formerly used in police service, to replace the front wheel spindles.

Case C3=27 involved the alleged failure of the steering relay rod on 1971 to 1973 Chevrolet Vegas manufactured by the General Motors Corporation. The problem concerned allegations of steering lockup due to presence of foreign objects (stones, debris) in the area of the front vehicle crossmember and the steering relay rod. Information developed during NHTSA testing was not considered sufficient to warrant further investigative effort, and the case was closed.

NHTSA's regular report series is issued to provide motorists, as well as the motor vehicle industry, with a complete account of federal defect investigation activity, while at the same time providing defect-related information in the interest of highway safety.

Interested persons with information bearing on current investigations are invited to write to: The Office of Defects Investigation, U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 400 Seventh St., SW, Washington, D.C. 20590.

Reports should indicate the make, model, year and serial number (VIN) of the vehicle, and all pertinent facts relating to the failure. Persons wishing to review summaries of the NHTSA's findings in terminated cases, or in the public file for suspended cases, may do so in technical reference room 5108 of the NHTSA at the above address.

TOLL-FREE "HOTLINE" REMINDER

Persons wishing to report automobile safety-related defects, request vehicle information or obtain information on activities of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration may use the NHTSA Auto Safety Hotline, direct to the Washington headquarters office.

This number is (800) 424-9393
Washington, D.C. residents should call 426-0123

Reporting Period: February thru May, 1977

SAFETY RELATED DEFECT INVESTIGATORY CASES
OPENED THIS REPORTING PERIOD

(Note: For all those cases listed below, investigation was initiated to determine whether an alleged problem did, in fact, exist, and whether the alleged problem constitutes a potential safety-related defect within the meaning of the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1966 (Act of 1966). The NHTSA objectives are to discover whether alleged problems do occur, the cause of such problems, and whether the problems result in property damage, injuries, or other safety-related problems.

In some instances, a manufacturer may recall certain vehicles or items of automotive equipoment after the investigation is begun. The investigation may then be terminated based on recall action, or it may be continued to determine whether the alleged problem affects other models or other model years which should also be recalled for remedy.)

February, 1977

Case Number: C7-10
Manufacturer: Ford Motor Company
Make: Mercury
Model: Capri
Year(s): 1971-1974 and 1976-1977

SUBJECT: Alleged Front Stabilizer Bar Failures in 1971 through 1974 and 1976 through 1977 Model Year Mercury Capri Vehicles Manufactured by the Ford Motor Company - ODI Case No. C7-10

BASIS FOR INVESTIGATION:

This case was opened by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) on February 4, 1977, based on a petition received from a Mr. Stuart F. Faunce in October, 1976. The petition alleges that Mr. Faunce's 1972 Ford Mercury Capri was in an accident as a result of improper design and manufacture of the front stabilizer bar. Specifically, Mr. Faunce asserts that the stabilizer bar failed through fatigue enhanced by a sharp radius at the machined ends. He also states that the machining marks were not properly polished. The NHTSA has received two reports of accidents involving personal injury allegedly due to this problem. Other information received disclosed that the same stabiilizer bar was used on 1971 through 1974 and 1976 through 1977 model year Capris. During the period 1971 through 1976, 452,870 vehicles of this type were produced; production figures for the 1977 model are not yet available since this model was only recently introduced.

DESCRIPTION AND FUNCTION:

The front stabilizer bar (stabilizer bar) and the track control arm (control arm) to which it is attached by a steel sleeve and rubber bushing are components of the vehicle suspension system. Together they regulate front wheel movements.

The control arm regulates lateral movements. The stabilizer bar regulates fore and aft movements, and together with the control arm reduces shock loading stresses on the steering linkage from road surface irregularities. However, its principal function is to counter vehicle tendency to roll or lean in cornering maneuvers. The centrifugal forces created by such maneuvers place a downward stress load on one end of the stabilizer bar and an upward stress load on the other. The stabilizer bar resists these loads, thereby impeding vehicle roll or lean and maintaining vehicle side to side equilibrium.

ANALYSIS OF THE ALLEGED PROBLEM:

Problem Mode: Allegedly, stabilizer bar failure is due to metal fatigue through crack initiation and propagation, with final fracture resulting from overload. The apparent primary contributing factor to fatigue crack initiation is a small radius fillet between the machined shank and the as-formed stabilizer bar. Reportedly, other apparent contributing factors are metallurgical impurities, environmental attack, and failure to properly finish the shank ends. Failure of the stabilizer bar can result in a front wheel being folded back against the rear of the fender well with resultant loss of control.

Problem Symptoms: There are no known pre-failure symptoms.

Case Number: C7-11
Manufacturer: Volkswagen A.G.
Make: Porsche
Model: 914
Year(s): 1974

SUBJECT: Alleged Fuel System Integrity Problems on 1974 Porsche Model 914 Vehicles Manufactured by Volkswagen A.G. ODI Case No. C7-11

BASIS FOR INVESTIGATION:

This case was opened on February 4, 1977, based on 17 owner complaints alleging the occurrence, without warning, of fuel fed engine compartment fires. The investigation involves an estimated 16,000 vehicles.

FUEL SYSTEM DESCRIPTION AND FUNCTION:

The Porsche Model 914 is equipped with an electronic fuel injector system which literally sprays fuel into the flow of air entering the engine's combustion chamber. Pressure in the injector fuel supply system is higher than in a system supplying fuel to a conventional carburetor. In the Porsche 914 system, a fuel pump located near the fuel tank supplies fuel at a pressure of approximately 35 psi to a fuel pressure regulator which reduces the pressure to 28 psi into the portion of the system which feeds the fuel injectors. In contrast, pressures in a typical fuel system supplying fuel to a conventionally carbureted Porsche are about 2.5 to 4.5 psi.

ANALYSIS OF THE ALLEGED PROBLEM:

Problem Mode: Allegedly, fuel leaks from the pressurized fuel supply system into the engine compartment where raw fuel and fuel vapors collect. Ignition of the fumes is reportedly caused by high voltage ignition wiring leakage or by engine backfire through the air cleaner.

Problem Symptoms: Fuel leaking into the engine compartment may produce a strong odor of gasoline in the passenger compartment of fuel stains on the surface under the parked vehicle.

March, 1977

Case Number: C7-12
Manufacturer: American Honda Company, Inc.
Make: GL 1000 and CB 750 Motorcycle
Model: Motorcycle
Year(s): 1975-1976

SUBJECT: Alleged Poor Wet Braking Performance on 1975 and 1976 Honda GL 1000 and CB 750F Motorcycles Manufactured by the Honda Motor Company - ODI Case No. C7-12

BASIS FOR INVESTIGATION:

A case was opened on March 15, 1977, based on 183 consumer complaints alleging poor wet braking performance involving subject motorcycles. No property damage or injury accidents were alleged. The NHTSA estimated the number of such vehicles on the highway at 75,000.

DESCRIPTION AND FUNCTION:

Subject motorcycles are equipped with front and rear wheel hydraulically-activated disc brakes. The front and rear brakes are controlled separately with the front activated by a hand lever and the rear activated by a foot pedal. Brakes serve to decelerate a vehicle and have a basic role in vehicle handling.

ANALYSIS OF THE ALLEGED PROBLEM:

Problem Mode: Allegedly, when driving in heavy rain, application of the brakes will result in little or no braking force for several seconds until the heat generated by the brake application "dries out" the brakes.
Contributing to the problem is the fact that these motorcycles use disc brakes on both front and back wheels, while to date most other motorcycles use drum brakes on the rear wheel which affords more protection from the elements.

Problem Symptoms: There are no known pre-failure symptoms.

April, 1977:

Case Number: C7-13
Manufacturer: Ford Motor Company
Make: Ford
Model: Econoline and Club Wagons
Year(s): 1975-1977

SUBJECT: Alleged Shattering of Nonpadded ABS Plastic Instrument Panels on 1975-1977 Ford Vans Manufactured by Ford Motor Company ODI Case No. C7-13

BASIS FOR INVESTIGATION:

A case was opened on April 11, 1977, based on receipt of two reports of noncollision accidents and one low speed collision accident in which it was alleged that the ABS plastic instrument panels on the subject vehicles shattered, leaving sharp edges having the propensity to lacerate and puncture the vehicle occupants. In two of the above reports, lacerations were alleged to have occurred to either the occupant's arm or face. The vehicles involved include an estimated 192,053, 1975-1977 Ford Econoline and Club Wagons without instrument panel padding.

DESCRIPTION AND FUNCTION:

The instrument panel serves as the interior finish for the forward part of the passenger compartment and conventionally houses the instruments and certain controls.

ANALYSIS OF THE ALLEGED PROBLEM:

Problem Mode: Allegedly, the instrument panel shatters under nominal pressure or impact leaving sharp, jagged edges which may result in lacerations or other injury.

Problem Symptom: There are no known pre-failure symptoms.

Case Number: C7-14
Manufacturer: Volkswagen A.G.
Make: Volkswagen and Audi
Model/Year(s): Rabbit 1975-76
Scirocco 1975-76
Dasher 1974-75
Audi 1973-75
Type I Sedan (Beetle) 1975
Type II Transporter (Vans) 1976

SUBJECT: Alleged Throttle Control System Malfunctions on 1975-1976 Rabbit and Scirocco, 1974-1975 Dasher, 1973-1975 Audi, 1975 Type I Sedan, and 1976 Type II Transporter Vehicles Manufactured by Volkswagen A.G. ODI Case No. C7-14

BASIS FOR INVESTIGATION:

A case was opened on April 11, 1977, based on 59 consumer complaints alleging throttle control malfunctions on the subject vehicles. Allegedly nine property damage accidents, five of which were injury accidents, resulted from this problem. The investigation involves an estimated 370,200 vehicles.

DESCRIPTION AND FUNCTION:

The subject Rabbit, Scirocco, Dasher, Audi, Type I Sedan, and Type II Transporter Volkswagen vehicles are equipped with a cable throttle control system. The throttle cable connects the accelerator pedal to the carburetor to control the amount of fuel/air mixture that enters the intake manifold, controlling the engine speed and power output.

ANALYSIS OF THE ALLEGED PROBLEM:

Problem Mode: Allegedly the throttle cable breaks or sticks, so that the driver is left with no effective control over the engine speed or power. Under these circumstances, the engine continues to operate at high speed or power output, or it returns to idle. As a consequence, the automobile may be difficult to control or may be caught in traffic with no means to move it off the road.

Problem Symptoms: There are no known pre-failure symptoms.

May, 1977

Case Number: C7-21
Manufacturer: General Motors Corporation
Make/Model: Chevrolet, Pontiac, Oldsmobile, Buick, Cadillac, and GMC trucks
Year: 1976

SUBJECT: Alleged Failure of the Power Brake Booster on 1976 Chevrolets, Pontiacs, Oldsmobiles, Buicks, Cadillacs, and GMC Trucks Manufactured by the General Motors Corporation. ODI Case No. C7-21

BASIS FOR INVESTIGATION:

For several months the NHTSA had been conducting an inquiry involving the power brake booster on 1976 Chevrolets, Pontiacs, Oldsmobiles, Buicks, Cadillacs, and GMC Trucks. The inquiry was based on owner reports of the loss of power brake assist and the necessity for the driver to use abnormally high brake pedal forces to stop the vehicle. Two minor accidents had been reported to General Motors due to the failure of the power brake booster. The investigation involves an estimated 2.2 million General Motors vehicles.

DESCRIPTION AND FUNCTION:

The power brake booster is a component of vehicle braking system whose function is to provide power-assisted braking to reduce the amount of brake pedal force needed to stop the vehicle.

ANALYSIS OF THE ALLEGED PROBLEM:

Problem Mode: Allegedly, the problem is the result of gasoline vapors from the engine manifold flowing back into the power booster can where, upon contact with cold metal, they condense into liquid gasoline. The liquid gasoline causes the booster diaphragm to deteriorate and eventually rupture, with a consequent loss of power brake assist, making it much more difficult to stop the vehicle. To the driver who has become accustomed to having power assistance for braking, the loss of power brake assist is often mistaken for a loss of braking power.

Problem Symptoms: There are no known pre-failure symptoms.

Case Number: C7-22
Manufacturer: Chrysler Corporation
Make/Model: Dart, Valiant, Aspen and Volare
Year(s): 1975-77

SUBJECT: Engine Stalling, Without Warning, while Vehicle is in Operation, Posing Hazard to Vehicle and Occupants in Traffic Situations and Involving 1975-77 Dart, Valiant, Aspen, and Volare Vehicles Manufactured by the Chrysler Corporation. ODI Case No. C7-22.

BASIS FOR INVESTIGATION:

The case was opened by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) on May 20, 1977, based on 114 owner complaints of engine stalling and owner reports that the problem could not be corrected by dealers. Owner reports indicate that stalling occurs, without warning, while vehicle is in operation in traffic, and poses a hazard to the vehicle and its occupants. There were no reports of injuries, but two accidents were allegedly caused by this problem. The investigation involves an estimated one million vehicles.

DESCRIPTION AND FUNCTION:

Adjustment of the engine to comply with emission control requirements or defects in the carburetor may be the cause of the stalling.

ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM:

Problem Mode: Allegedly, the problem can occur at any time, even while driving in traffic with the engine warm. The precise reason for stalling and the specific components involved have not yet been fully identified. Stalling can lead to obstruction of traffic while the driver re-starts the car, and under these circumstances the car may be struck by another vehicle whose driver is anticipating that the stalled car will move.

Problem Symptoms: There are no known pre-failure symptoms.

Case Number: C7-23
Manufacturer: Toyota Motor Sales
Make/Model: Corona Mark II
Year(s): 1969-1972

SUBJECT: Alleged Electrical Fires in Central Console of 1969-1972 Corona Mark II Vehicles With Automatic Transmissions and Manufactured by Toyota Motor Sales. ODI Case No. C7-23

BASIS FOR INVESTIGATION:

The investigation was opened on May 20, 1977 on the basis of reports alleging the occurrence of 22 fires attributable to the problem. Reports were received from individual owners as well as insurance companies. The NHTSA has received one report of death due to a fire in one of these models, but the cause of the fire is not yet known. No other reports of death or injury have been received. The investigation involves an estimated 100,000 vehicles.

DESCRIPTION AND FUNCTION:

The central console is located between the front seats of the vehicle and houses the automatic transmission shift level and associated indicator and circuitry.

ANALYSIS OF THE ALLEGED PROBLEM:

Problem Mode: Allegedly, fires may begin when the vehicles are shifted into Park. Reportedly, a short circuit is produced which starts electrical fires that can quickly spread to the console.

Problem Symptoms: There are known pre-failure symptoms.

Case Number: C7-24
Manufacturer: Ford Motor Company
Make/Model: Passenger cars and light trucks equipped with flex-fans
Year(s): 1970-77

SUBJECT: Alleged Breakage of Blades on Engine Cooling Fans on 1970-1977 Ford Motor Company Passenger Cars and Light Trucks Equipped with Flex-fans. ODI Case No. C7-24.

BASIS FOR INVESTIGATION:

A case was opened based on receipt of 29 reports of flex-fan breakage, including one where a mechanic suffered a severe arm injury when struck by a portion of the blade that had broken off and been propelled with great velocity. In response to an NHTSA query, Ford reported receipt or awareness of 185 complaints of fan blade breakage, including 13 reports of injury. Since opening the investigation, the NHTSA has received a report of one death allegedly caused by this problem. While the precise number of vehicles equipped with flex-fans is undetermined, over 6,200,000 fans of this type were shipped to Ford assembly plants for use on 1970-1977 Ford passenger cars.

DESCRIPTION AND FUNCTION:

These flex-fans consist of five or seven curved, flexible blades. As fan rotating speed increases with an increase in engine operating speed, the blades flex backward or flatten out. This reduction in fan blade pitch results in less engine horsepower consumption from operation, and results in noise reduction as well.

ANALYSIS OF THE ALLEGED PROBLEM:

Problem Mode: Apparently, the constant flexing the blades over a period of time, coupled with other factors, results in metal fatigue which causes the fan blades to crack and break off. Because the fan rotates at high speeds, the broken pieces can be propelled with great velocity. These broken pieces of fan blade can cause serious injury to individuals working on their engines with the hood up and the motor running, or to individuals standing nearby.

Problem Symptoms: While there are no known reliable pre-failure symptoms, those aware of this potential problem may, through careful examination of their fans, detect the beginning of cracks before blade breakage results.

Case Number: C4-15
Manufacturer: General Motors Corporation
Make: General Motors
Model: Cadillac
Year(s): 1969-1970

Possible Problems: Alleged Failure of Air Conditioner Blower Relay

Conclusions: Information developed during the course of this investigation was considered insufficient to warrant further expenditure of resources.

Case Number: C4-20
Manufacturer: Toyota Motor Sales
Make: Toyota
Model: Coronas and Corollas
Year(s): 1971

Possible Problems: Alleged Unsatisfactory Performance of the Hood Latch System

Conclusions: Information developed during the course of this investigation was considered insufficient to warrant further expenditure of resources.

Case Number: C6-19
Manufacturer: Alsport, Inc.
Make: Tri-Sport
Model: SL Series, three-wheeled motorcycle
Year(s): 1974

Possible Problems: Alleged failure of chassis drive train and brake. Wheel and control arm separations could lead to loss of control; chain failures can result in severed brake and gas lines.

Conclusions: After opening the investigation it was learned that Alsport had ceased manufacturing operations and had entered into bankruptcy proceedings. Because of this, it appeared that Alsport would be unable to fulfill owner notification and remedy obligations.

The NHTSA considered conducting its own owner notification program, but was informed that Alsport files do not contain the necessary list of owners of the affected vehicles.

The NHTSA did, on June 18, 1976, issue a Consumer Protection Bulletin warning owners of these vehicles of the potential problems.

SAFETY RELATED DEFECT INVESTIGATORY CASES
TERMINATED THIS REPORTING PERIOD

(Note: Information collected during these investigations is available for public viewing in the NHTSA public files.)

February, 1977

Case Number: IR 161
Manufacturer: GM, Chrysler, AMC and Ford
Make: All
Model: All
Year(s): 1965-1971

Possible Problems: Alleged Failure of Power Brake Vacuum

Conclusions:

1. All investigations for the four subcases comprising Case No. 161 are now complete.

2. The subcases involving AMC, Ford, and Chrysler were closed on May 19, 1975.

3. The Administration has dismissed the initial safety defect determination proceeding directed against GM and the investigative file is closed.

Case Number: 190.009
Manufacturer: Monitor Coach
Make: Travel Trailer
Model: All
Year(s): 1965-1970

Possible Problems: Alleged Overloading of Vehicle Suspension System

Conclusions: By letter dated 1-27-77, the Monitor Coach Company advised the NHTSA of its intention to conduct an owner notification campaign and to upgrade, free of charge, the suspension systems on subject travel trailers. This action is in response to the initial determination of safety-related defect by NHTSA, on December 1, 1976. The NHTSA identification number assigned to the Monitor campaign is 77-0019.

March, 1977

Case Number: 287
Manufacturer: Ford Motor Company
Make: Ford
Model: Galaxie
Year(s): 1968-1970

Possible Problems: Alleged failure of front wheel spindle due to fatigue crack in the heel area.

Conclusions: Based on results of NHTSA investigation, with initial defect determination, on January 26, 1977, Ford Motor Company advised the Administration of its intention to conduct an owner notification campaign and to replace, without charge, front wheel spindles on 1969 Ford and Mercury model vehicles used or formerly used in police service. Recall Campaign Number 77-0009.

Case Number: C3-27
Manufacturer: General Motors Corporation
Make: Chevrolet
Model: Vega
Year(s): 1971-1973

Possible Problems: Alleged Failure of Steering Relay Rod

Conclusions: Investigation disclosed three instances of steering lockup allegedly due to the presence of foreign objects (stones, dirt, debris) in the area of the front crossmember and steering relay rod. Investigation reports covering the three incidents state that efforts to induce steering lockup with hand-placed stones were unsuccessful or that the mechanical advantage of the steering gear would overcome interference of any stones present.

Information developed during NHTSA testing was not considered sufficient to warrant further investigation effort and the case was closed.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATION

CURRENT INVESTIGATIONS OF ALLEGED SAFETY RELATED DEFECTS

I. INVESTIGATIONS

Report for Period Ending: May, 1977

Those cases listed hereon are the subjects of current safety-related investigations being conducted in accordance with NHTSA responsibilities under provisions of the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1966. When an investigation is begun, it should not be assumed that a defect exists; only that a safety-related problem has been reported with sufficient indication of its existence to justify a formal investigation. The aim of the formal investigation is to establish whether a vehicle defect is causing the problem, and, if so, how it happens, and how it may be remedied. The NHTSA will make public its conclusions upon completion of each investigation. In line with the foregoing, the NHTSA solicits from the public pertinent information relating to the cases listed. By submitting such information, you make your contribution to highway safety.

CASE NO.	MANUFACTURER/MAKE	MODEL	YEAR	COMPONENT	POSSIBLE PROBLEMS
128	Ford	F-250	1968-1969	16 x 5.5 Two Piece Wheel	Lock Ring Gutter Failure. Could Result in Rapid Air Loss or Side Ring Leaving Wheel.
282	Ford	Ford Mercry	1965-1974	15 x 5-inch Single Piece Wheel	Alleged Wheel Rim Failure. Could Result in Rapid Air Loss From Tire.
C2-32	General Motors	GMC 1/2-Ton Pickups	1960-1970	15 x 5.5-inch Single Piece Wheel	Alleged Wheel Rim Failure. Could Result in Rapid Air Loss From Tire.
C2-53	Ford	All	1967 and later	Dual Master Brake Cylinder	Failure of Cylinder Due to Corrosion Could Result in Loss of Braking.
C2-60	Volkswagen	All	Pre-1963	Heater	Engine Fume Intrusion into Passenger Compartment Affects Drivers Control of Vehicle.

HS Form 338 (Feb. 1975)

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
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CURRENT INVESTIGATIONS OF ALLEGED SAFETY RELATED DEFECTS

Report for Period Ending: May,1977

CASE NO.	MANUFACTURER/MAKE	MODEL	YEAR	COMPONENT	POSSIBLE PROBLEMS
C2-61	Ford	Ford Mercury	1969-1971	15 x 6.5 Single Piece Wheel	Disc Failure Could Result in Wheel Loss.
C3-02	Honda	CB 750, CB 500 CB 450 (K3 &K4)	All	Gas Tank Filler Cap	Becomes Dislodged Allowing Gas to be Ignited After Vehicle Crash.
C3-03	Chrysler	All "C" Body	1969-1973	Bulkhead Electrical Connector	Becomes Disconnected Resulting in Complete Loss of Electrical Power.
C3-34	General Motors	Light Duty Trucks	1966-1971	Rear Axle Control Arm	Alleged Rear Axle Control Arm Failures Could Effect Vehicle Control.
C3-35	International Harvester	Travelall 1110 4 x 4	1972-1973	Steering Arm Ball	Alleged Steering Instability Upon Hard or Panic Brake Use- Vehicle May Swerve Upon Braking Action.
C3-43	General Motors	Cadillac Eldorado & Oldsmobile	1967-1973	Front Wheel Mounting Bolts	Alleged Failure of Front Wheel Mounting Bolts Could Result in Loss of Wheels.
C4-07	Ford	Ford Mercury	1970-1971	Hood Latch	Failure of Latch Mechanism Could Result in Hood Popup Obscuring Driver Vision.
C4-08	International Harvester	1600, 1700 and 1800 Series Loadstar Chassis	1972-1973	Rear Axle U-Bolts/ Nuts	Alleged Low Torque of Rear Axle U-Bolts/Nuts Allows Axle to Shift and Could Effect Vehicle Control.

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NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATION

CURRENT INVESTIGATIONS OF ALLEGED SAFETY RELATED DEFECTS

Report for Period Ending:-------- May,1977

CASE NO.	MANUFACTURER/MAKE	MODEL	YEAR	COMPONENT	POSSIBLE PROBLEMS
C4-09	Chrysler	Dodge Darts and Plymouth Valiants	1967-1972	Brake Proportioning Valve	Rear Wheel Lockup During Braking. Could Result in Loss of Vehicle Control.
C4-10	Winnebago	D24 Motorhome	1970-1971	Front End Suspension	Alleged Inadequate Front End Suspension Could Result in Overloading the Vehicle and Failure of Suspension System Components.
C4-11	Action Industries, Inc.	24- and 25- Foot Motorhome	1971	Front End Suspension	Same as C4-10.
C4-12	Champion Home Builders	24-Foot Motorhome	1971	Front End Suspension	Same as C4-10.
C4-13	Boise Cascade	Lifetime Premier 23-Foot Motorhome	1969-1971	Front End Suspension	Same as C4-10.
C4-14	PRF Industries	Travco 220 Motorhome	1970	Front End Suspension	Same as C4-10.
C4-17	General Motors	Chevrolet Series C, P, G-10 Trucks and GMC Series C, P, G-1500 Trucks	1971-1972	Steering Tie Rod	Separation of Ball From Socket With Loss of Vehicle Control.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATION

CURRENT INVESTIGATIONS OF ALLEGED SAFETY RELATED DEFECTS

Report for Period Ending: May,1977

CASE NO.	MANUFACTURER/MAKE	MODEL	YEAR	COMPONENT	POSSIBLE PROBLEMS
C4-18	Ford	Fairlane and Ranchero Mercury Montego Ford Falcon Mercury Comet	1965-1969 1965-1969 1965-1970 1965-1970	Engine Mounts	Secondary Effects from Shearing of Engine Mounts. Engine Lift and Rotation Could Depress Throttle in Open Position and Result in Loss of Control.
C4-26	General Motors	All Passenger Cars	1967-1973	Power Steering Gear	Alleged Power Steering Lockup and Self-Steering Problems. Could Result in Loss of Vehicle Control.
C4-28	Ford	All Pintos	1971-1972	Rack and Pinion Steering	Alleged Steering Difficulty or Loss of Steering Control Due to Bending of Steering Assembly Due to Wheel Impacts.
C4-29	Ford	All With 4-Barrel Carburetors	1968-1974	Non-Metallic Fast Idle Cam	Breakage Causes Jamming of Throttle in Open Position, Resulting in Loss of Control of Vehicle Speed.
C4-30	Ford	School Bus B-700	1966-1974	Brake Drum	Alleged Front Brake Drum Failure. Could Result in Loss of Braking.

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CURRENT INVESTIGATIONS OF ALLEGED SAFETY RELATED DEFECTS

Report for Period Ending: May,1977

CASE NO.	MANUFACTURER/MAKE	MODEL	YEAR	COMPONENT	POSSIBLE PROBLEMS
C4-34	Nissan	Datsun 510 Datsun 1200	1969-1971 1971	Filler Hose and Three-Way Connector	Alleged Filler Hose and Three-Way Connector Leaks. Could Result in Loss of Fuel and Possibility of Fire.
C4-35	Nissan	Datsun 510	1968-1971	Transverse Link	Alleged Transverse Link Failures. May Result in Loss of Vehicle Control.
C4-44	General Motors	Rochester Carburetor Equipped	1965-1972	Carburetor Float	Alleged Carburetor Flooding Due to Float Saturation. Fuel Could Overflow onto Hot Engine Resulting in Fire.
C4-46	Western Auto	Wizard A-5030	Various	Auto Jack Stand	Failure to Meet Load Rating. Failure of Jack Stand while in Use Could Result in Injury to Individuals Under or Adjacent to the Vehicle.
C4-52	International Harvester	Scout II Travelall and Pickup	1970-1973	Brake Lining	Alleged Erratic Service Brake Operation or Performance Could Affect Control During Braking.

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NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATION

CURRENT INVESTIGATIONS OF ALLEGED SAFETY RELATED DEFECTS

Report for Period Ending: May,1977

CASE NO.	MANUFACTURER/MAKE	MODEL	YEAR	COMPONENT	POSSIBLE PROBLEMS
C4-53	General Motors	Chevelle	1965-1969	Engine Mounts	Alleged Engine Mount Failure. See C4-18.
C4-59	Volkswagen	VW Type 3 prior to August 1971; Porsche 914, 1.8,1.7 and 2.0 Liter Engine; VW Type 4, 1.7 Liter Engine	1970-1972	Bosch Fuel Injector	Alleged Electronic Fuel Injector Leakage. Could Result in Engine Compartment Fires.
C5-01	General Motors	Chevrolet Corvettes	1964-1974	Rear Wheel Bearing	Failure of Rear Wheel Bearings. Wheels May Bind up or Lock.
C5-03	International Harvester	Travelalls and Pickups	1974	Battery Cable	Alleged Shorting of the Positive Battery Cable. Could Cause a Spark That Ignites Flammable Materials in Engine Compartment.
C5-04	Ceat S.P.A.	Mercurio 10.00 x 20/22,14-ply (Load Range G) Steel Belted Radial	Various	Tire	Failure in Bead Area. Loss of Vehicle Control Due to Rapid Loss of Air Pressure or Tire Blowout.
C5-07	General Motors	Pontiac all V8 Equipped Engines	1966-1972	Timing Gear and Chain	Failure of Timing Gear and Chain Resulting in Loss of Engine Power in traffic.

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CURRENT INVESTIGATIONS OF ALLEGED SAFETY RELATED DEFECTS

Report for Period Ending: May, 1977

CASE NO.	MANUFACTURER/MAKE	MODEL	YEAR	COMPONENT	POSSIBLE PROBLEMS
C5-08	Toyota Motor Sales	Corolla and Carina Vehicle Equipped with 1600cc Engine	1971-1973	Throttle	Alleged Throttle Sticking. Could Result in Loss of Vehicle Control.
C5-09	Kar-Rite	Jack Stand Model 1052, Rated at 4,000 Pounds	All	Jack Stand	See C4-46
C5-25	Volvo	Volvo	1973	Front Bumper Bracket	Failure of Front Bumper Support Bracket. Could Result in Loss of Bumper.
C5-26	Ford	Mercury Capri	1971-1973	Seat Failures	Failure in Reclining Mechanism Allowing Seat to Rotate Rearwards and Could Result in Loss of Control.
C5-32	Fruhling Products	Fruhling SAF-T-RELEASE Motorcycle Helmet Chin Strap	All	Helmet Strap Fastner	Motorcycle Helmet Strap May be Prone to Opening While in Use. Helmet Could be Dislodged from Wearer's Head.
C6-22	American Motors Corporation	Pacer	1975	Power Steering Gear	Alleged Leakage of Rack and Pinion Seal Resulting in Possible Loss of Steering Control.

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CURRENT INVESTIGATIONS OF ALLEGED SAFETY RELATED DEFECTS

Report for Period Ending: May, 1977

	CASE NO.	MANUFACTURER/MAKE	MODEL	YEAR	COMPONENT	POSSIBLE PROBLEMS
	C6-31	Ford	F-250 and F-350 Series Trucks	1972-1974	Budd Duo-Rim & "C" Section Side Ring	Alleged Explosive Separation of "C" Section Side Ring From Budd Duo-Rim Wheels. Could Result in Loss of Air Pressure, Loss of Vehicle Control, and Injury From Separated Side Ring.
	C7-10	Ford	Mercury Capri	1971-1974 1976-1977	Front Stabilizer Bar	Alleged Front Stabilizer Bar Failures. Could Result in Loss of Vehicle Control.
*	C7-11	Volkswagen	Porsche with 914 Engine	1974	Fuel System	Alleged Fuel System Integrity Problems. Could Result in Engine Compartment Fires.
	C7-12	American Honda	750 & 1000cc Motorcycles	1975-1976	Disc Brakes	Alleged Poor Wet Braking Performance. Loss of Initial Braking While Driving in the Rain.
*	C7-13	Ford	Econoline/Club Wagon Vans	1975-1977	Instrument Panel	Shattering of Instrument Panel Under Impact Could Cause Severe Lacerations to Passenger.

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CURRENT INVESTIGATIONS OF ALLEGED SAFETY RELATED DEFECTS

Report for Period Ending: May, 1977

	CASE NO.	MANUFACTURER/MAKE	MODEL	YEAR	COMPONENT	POSSIBLE PROBLEMS
	C7-14	Volkswagen	Rabbit Scirocco Dasher Audi	1975-1976 1975-1976 1974-1975 1973-1975	Throttle Control System	Alleged Throttle Control System Malfunctions Could Result in Loss of Vehicle Control.
*	C7-21	General Motors	Chevrolet, Pontiac, Oldsmobile, Buick Cadillac, and GMC Trucks	1976	Power Brake Booster	Power Brake Booster Failure Requires High Brake Pedal Forces to Stop Vehicle.
	C7-22	Chrysler	Dart, Valiant, Aspen, Volare	1975-1977	Carburetion and Emissions System	Vehicle Stalling -Carburetion and Emissions. Could Result in Loss of Control or Accident in Traffic Situation.
	C7-23	Toyota Motor Sales	Corona Mark II	1969-1972	Central Console	Electrical Fires in Console Could Result in Occupant Injury or Fire Damage to Vehicle.
**	C7-24	Ford	Passenger Cars and Light Trucks	1970-1977	Flex-Fan (Engine Cooling Fan)	Flex-Fan Breakage Can Result in Injury to Anyone Working Under Hood of Vehicle with Engine Operating.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATION

CURRENT INVESTIGATIONS OF ALLEGED SAFETY RELATED DEFECTS

II. INVESTIGATIONS IN LITIGATION, INITIAL DETERMINATION AND/OR SUSPENSION

Report for Period: Ending: May, 1977

	CASE NO.	MANUFACTURER/MAKE	MODEL	YEAR	COMPONENT	POSSIBLE PROBLEMS
*	140	Ford (FINAL DEFECT DETERMINATION MADE 8-12-75, IN LITIGATION)	Mustang and Cougar	1968-1969	Seat Back Pivot Arm	Inboard Pivot Failures. Seat Back Could Collapse Resulting in Loss of Vehicle Control.
	C3-11	General Motors (IN LITIGATION 2-13-74)	Cadillac	1959-1960	Steering Pitman Arm	Fatigue Failure Causing Loss of Vehicle Control.
	C3-29	Ford (FINAL DEFECT DETERMINATION MADE 12-30-75, IN LITIGATION)	Mercury Capri	1971-1973	Windshield Wiper Arm Shaft and Motor	Arm Detaches From Drive Shaft Motor; Failure Due to Underpower. Could Result in Loss of Driver Visibility.
*	C4-23	General Motors (INITIAL DEFECT DETERMINATION MADE 2-14-77)	Buick Opel	1964-1971	Fuel Tank and System	Tail Light Mounting Bolt Can Penetrate Fuel Tank in Right Rear-end Impacts at Speeds Below 10 mph.

* SINCE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS LISTING, MANUFACTURER HAS NOTIFIED NHTSA OF THEIR INTENT TO INITIATE OWNER NOTIFICATION AND RECALL.

** SINCE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS LISTING, THE MANUFACTURER HAS RECALLED CERTAIN 1972 MODEL VEHICLES AND HAS NOTIFIED NHTSA OF HIS INTENT TO RECALL CERTAIN 1976 AND 1977 MODELS.

HS Form 338A (Feb. 1975)

U.S. Department of Transportation
news:
Office of Public Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20590

FOR RELEASE WEDNESDAY
September 7, 1977

NHTSA 74-77 (IHC)
Tel: (202) 426-0670

TOYOTA RECALL

The U.S. Department of Transportation announced today that 134,605 Toyota Corona automobiles will be recalled to correct a safety defect that reportedly has caused 54 fires in the center consoles of these vehicles.

None of the fires reported to date has resulted in any accidents or personal injuries. The defect was identified in an investigation conducted by the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

The 1970-1972 Corona and Corona Mark II vehicles with automatic transmission, under investigation by the NHTSA since May 20, 1977, are being recalled to replace the neutral safety switches. The switch is an electrical device that prevents the car from starting in any gear other than PARK or NEUTRAL.

The problem stems from poor quality insulating material used in the switches and can result in electrical shorts and fires in the transmission console between the front seats, where the switch is located.

The company has ordered the necessary parts to replace all the neutral safety switches in these cars, but will not be ready to conduct the recall campaign until late September or early October. At that time, owners will receive first-class letters from Toyota notifying them of the recall.

Until the repairs are made, Joan Claybrook, NHTSA Administrator, suggested that owners "be especially alert to any burning odors or smoke coming from the vicinity of the transmission console and, if such symptoms are detected, to immediately pull off the road, turn off the ignition and get all passengers out of the vehicle."

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATION
Washington, D.C. 20590

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Office of Public Affairs
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FOR RELEASE THURSDAY
September 8, 1977

NHTSA-71-77
Tel. 202-426-9550

MONTHLY

COMPLIANCE REPORT

FOR JUNE 1977

Copies of the Compliance Test Reports listed in this summary are available for viewing in the Technical Reference Division, Room 5108, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 400 7th Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20590.

Reproduced copy of any page, or an entire report, may be purchased at the above address in accordance with the fee schedule prescribed by Part 7, 40 CFR (Public Availability of Information). Basically, the fee is established at 25¢ for the first page and 5¢ for each additional page.

U.S. Department of Transportation
news:

Office of Public Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20590

FOR RELEASE WEDNESDAY
September 14, 1977

NHTSA -- 76-77 (HP)
Tel. 202-426-9550

DOT ORDERS HEARING ON
FORD RECALL CAMPAIGN

A hearing to determine whether the Ford Motor Co. has reasonably carried out its obligation to repair 1968 and 1969 Mustangs and Cougars with defective bucket style driver seats was announced today by the U. S. Department of Transportation.

The hearing, scheduled for Oct. 4, was ordered by Joan Claybrook, Administrator of the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), after reviewing petitions filed by a consumer in Redwood City, Calif., and another in New York City.

They had asked for the hearing on the adequacy of Ford's recall campaign, which was initiated last April.

In August 1975, the federal safety agency ordered Ford to recall the 1968 and 1969 Mustangs and Cougars but the company refused. After a two-year legal battle, a U. S. District Court judge found last October that the defect in the driver's seats of these vehicles could result in the seat back suddenly falling backwards at speeds of up to 60 miles per hour. When this happens, the driver could fall into the back seat and lose control of the car.

The court heard evidence that several accidents have occurred as a result of such seat failures, including injuries resulting in hospitalization. Ford's own expert witness later stated that a total of approximately 170,000 driver seat failures may have occurred. The District Court found that the seat failures present "a severe threat to motor vehicle safety" to some 500,000 owners of the vehicles.

- more -

After first appealing this decision, Ford agreed to conduct a recall campaign. Since that time, the NHTSA has received a large number of consumer complaints alleging that adequate quantities of replacement parts designed to correct the problem have been unavailable at local dealerships.

Other information received by the agency indicates that problems exist with respect to dealers requiring inspection of the defective seat prior to repair and owners of these vehicles being directed to dealerships many miles from their homes.

The NHTSA has on two occasions, in May and July of this year, asked Ford to explain why problems have arisen in connection with the recall campaign. The company has assured Ms. Claybrook that the campaign would be run properly, but consumer complaints continue.

The NHTSA warns owners of the defective vehicles who have not had their seats repaired to prop a large, firm object (such as a suitcase) behind the driver's seat when the vehicle is in use. The agency also suggests that owners ask dealers to repair these seats at the earliest possible date, and to insist that dealers obtain parts immediately.

The hearing will be held at 10 a.m. in Room 4234 of the DOT Headquarters Building, 400 Seventh St., SW, Washington, D. C. Any interested persons, (including the manufacturer) may make oral or written presentations on whether Ford has reasonably met its legal obligations. Persons who wish to make oral presentations should notify, in writing, Mrs. Nancy Martus, Office of Defects Investigation, NHTSA, Washington, D. C. 20590, or call 202-426-2850 by the close of business on Sept. 30, 1977.

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FOR RELEASE TUESDAY
September 20, 1977

NHTSA 75-77
Tel: (202) 426-9550

VETTER NAMED COORDINATOR OF NHTSA 55 MPH PROGRAM

The U.S. Department of Transportation has appointed Fred W. Vetter Jr. as States' Coordinator for 55 mile per hour programs for the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

Highly experienced in the field of highway safety at both the federal and state levels, Vetter has served for nearly three years as Associate Administrator for Traffic Safety Programs at NHTSA.

In his new post, he will be responsible for focusing public attention on the benefits of the national 55 mph speed limit in saving lives and conserving fuel; judging public acceptance of the program; communicating with state enforcement officers and citizen and industry groups and recommending any necessary improvements to NHTSA.

"I am personally grateful that we have within our ranks an individual with the ability and experience required for this important mission," said Joan Claybrook, Administrator of the NHTSA.

A native of Snohomish, Wash., the 55-year-old executive was a career military officer, rising through the ranks from Private to Brigadier General, at the time of his retirement in August 1970.

Prior to joining the federal safety agency in December 1974, Vetter served for more than three years as Governor's Representative for Highway Safety in Delaware, Chairman of the Governor's Advisory Council on Highway Safety in that state, Chairman of the Delaware Agency to Reduce Crime, and a member of the Delaware Organized Crime Commission.

Mr. Vetter attended the University of Wisconsin, and holds BA and MBA degrees from George Washington University, where he majored in economics. He is also a graduate of the Industrial College of the Armed Forces.

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CONSUMER ADVISORY

FOR RELEASE THURSDAY
September 15, 1977

NHTSA -- 77-77
Tel No. (202) 426-0670

AMC RECALLS 26,000 VEHICLES FOR FLEX-FAN REPLACEMENT

The recall of an estimated 26,500 AMC Matador vehicles for replacement of engine cooling fans was announced today by the U.S. Department of Transportation. The recall involves 1976 Matador vehicles equipped with "flex-fans," V8 engines, and air conditioning or a maximum cooling package.

Joan Claybrook, Administrator of the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) said that "the recall is the direct result of our inquiry to the American Motors Corp. (AMC) in connection with an investigation into flex-fan failures in Ford Motor Co. vehicles."

In developing data to respond to the NHTSA query, AMC determined that it too had problems with this type of fan. Although there was no record of fatalities or injuries, AMC informed NHTSA of its intent to recall the 1976 Matador vehicles for replacement of the fans.

Replies to the same inquiry from Chrysler Corp. and General Motors indicate no significant incidence of flex-fan failure, to date.

AMC also informed the safety agency that owners of the affected vehicles will be notified as soon as possible, and that necessary parts to replace the suspect fans will be available in several weeks.

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Because of the delay in parts availability, Ms. Claybrook cautioned owners of AMC vehicles with flex-fans that "data available to us from our Ford investigation indicate this type of fan can seriously injure and kill." She reminded vehicle owners that the flex-fan has curved blades which flex and flatten out when engine operating speed is increased, and that this constant flexing of the blades can result in metal fatigue which causes the blades to crack and break off. These broken blades can be propelled, with great velocity, in any direction.

The NHTSA administrator warned owners of these vehicles, as well as service personnel, that until the engine fan is replaced, avoid working on the engine or standing anywhere near it if the hood is up and the engine is running.

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CONSUMER ADVISORY

FOR RELEASE WEDNESDAY
September 21, 1977

NHTSA 80-77 (IHC)
Tel. No. (202) 426-0670

SUBCOMPACT INVESTIGATION

The U.S. Department of Transportation today announced it has initated a major investigation of fuel tank fires in subcompact passenger cars.

In response to recent charges about the safety of Ford Pinto gas tanks in rear-end collisions, the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has begun a special program of vehicle-to-vehicle crash testing to measure the susceptibility to fire of fuel tanks in Pintos and other small cars.

NHTSA Administrator Joan Claybrook said the agency also will test full sized vehicles to establish a baseline for comparative purposes.

"Because automobile fires are among the most terrifying safety hazards anyone can encounter, we intend to pursue this matter quickly," said Ms. Claybrook. "We will find out whether a safety defect exists, and if so, what we can do to correct it."

Ms. Claybrook noted that the millions of people who drive or ride in subcompact cars have a right to know if they are being subjected to an undue risk of fire in rear-end collisions.

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The agency's investigation also will include an analysis of the "real world" experience of small cars involved in rear-end collisions resulting in fires. Data for this analysis will come from the agency's Fatal Accident Reporting System (FARS) -- a comprehensive file of fatal accident reports accumulated since 1975 --- and other information on non-fatal accidents.

NHTSA reported that an initial query of the fatal accident data system revealed that, since 1975, 19 Pintos have been involved in fatal fires claiming 23 lives. Ford Motor Co. requested this information and used it in a refutation of the charges made against the Pinto. Since the initial query, NHTSA has documented seven more fatal Pinto fires, claiming an additional 12 lives.

The new test program will help develop important additional information for this investigation.

Ms. Claybrook emphasized that NHTSA has made no determination that one make or model is more fire-prone than any other. The investigation is intended to identify any such problems.

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CONSUMER ADVISORY

FOR RELEASE THURSDAY
September 22, 1977

NHTSA -- 78-77
Tel No. (202) 426-0670

FORD TO RECALL 290,000 GRANADAS

The recall of an estimated 290,000 Ford Motor Co. Granada vehicles for replacement of gas tank filler caps was announced today by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

The recall involves 1977 "base model" vehicles which have the gas tank filler cap exposed. In other Granada models, the cap is hidden by a small door.

Joan Claybrook, administrator of the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) said that "the recall is the direct result of our compliance testing program which revealed that this model failed to pass the requirements of federal motor vehicle safety standard No.301-75, Fuel System Integrity." She said that a 1977, two-door, base model Granada was subjected to a rear impact crash test followed by a static rollover test, and that during the rollover test fluid spillage from the gas tank filler cap was greater than that allowed by the standard.

Ms. Claybrook said that the NHTSA has no knowledge of any injuries caused by this problem to date. However, she warned motorists that a rear end crash and rollover could result in fuel spillage which could be ignited by a spark.

On Sept. 13, Ford Motor Co. informed NHTSA of its intention to recall the affected vehicles. No precise date was announced for the recall since replacement gas tank filler caps are not yet available. Ms. Claybrook has urged the manufacturer to do everything possible to expedite the supply of the required replacement caps.

When replacement caps become available, Ford is expected to mail them to affected vehicle owners, thereby avoiding the necessity for owners to call their dealers and take time off from work or other activities to visit a dealer for recall correction.

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FOR RELEASE MONDAY
September 26, 1977

NHTSA 79-77
Tel: (202) 426-9550

AUTOMATIC CRASH PROTECTION SHOWS DRAMATIC RESULTS

Newly compiled accident data collected by the U.S. Department of Transportation indicates a dramatic reduction in highway deaths in cars equipped with automatic crash protection.

The latest survey by the Department's Fatal Accident Reporting System (FARS) shows the death rate for Deluxe Model Volkswagen Rabbits equipped with the automatic shoulder belt is about one-third the rate for other VW Rabbits equipped with ordinary seat belts.

The VW Rabbits provide for the first time a direct comparison between automatic restraint systems and regular seat belts because the cars are otherwise identical. The automatic shoulder belt automatically goes into place when the door is closed.

FARS, operated by DOT's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, keeps a comprehensive file of fatal accident reports obtained from the states. The latest data show:

--There are approximately 79,000 Rabbits with automatic crash protection on the nation's highways. These cars have traveled about 1.2 billion miles.

--Nearly 300,000 Rabbits with regular seat belts have traveled about 4.8 billion miles.

--There have been only six reported fatalities in the cars with automatic crash protection -- a rate of .50 per 100 million miles -- compared with 81 deaths in regular seat belt cars, for a rate of 1.7 per 100 million miles.

The VW type automatic crash protection is one system that can be used by auto manufacturers to meet the requirements of the Transportation Department's recently announced standard on occupant crash protection.

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The standard, issued by Transportation Secretary Brock Adams on June 30, 1977, requires the installation of automatic restraint systems to protect front seat occupants in crashes beginning with all full-size passenger cars in model year 1982. All intermediate and compact cars will have to have such equipment by model year 1983, and all passenger cars will be required to provide passive protection systems by model year 1984.

"We are seeing a preview of the expected improvement in highway safety that will come when all cars on the road have automatic occupant crash protection systems," said Joan Claybrook, the NHTSA administrator. "The information gleaned from accident reports from across the nation confirms the department's expectation of the enormous payoff of automatic restraints in reducing deaths and serious injuries in automobile crashes."

She said a recent agency study showed that only 20 percent of vehicle occupants wear their safety belts and that restraints such as automatic belts or air bags could save 9,000 lives and prevent tens of thousands of injuries a year once they are installed in the entire U.S. auto fleet.

The NHTSA noted that there have been other indications of the improved safety in Volkswagen Rabbits with automatic restraints. In a preliminary analysis of insurance claims data released last July, the Highway Loss Data Institute found a reduction of between 19 and 27 percent in the frequency of claims in these Rabbits compared with Rabbits having only seat belts, both overall and as a function of collision claims associated with injury.

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CONSUMER ADVISORY

FOR RELEASE THURSDAY
September 29, 1977

NHTSA 81-77 (BMA)
Tel. No. (202) 426-0670

NATIONAL AUTO SAFETY HOTLINE
MADE PERMANENT FACILITY

Call 800-424-9393
(D.C. Residents call 426-0123)

The U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) today announced that its experimental "Auto Safety Hotline" would be made a permanent facility.

In a ceremony marking the second anniversary of the Hotline, Joan Claybrook, NHTSA Administrator, said the facility had proved its value, both to the motoring public as well as to the federal safety agency.

She emphasized, however, that the Hotline had still not reached its potential since "too many motorists are still unaware of this toll-free facility which can be used, day or night, to report vehicle safety problems and obtain vehicle recall information."

Ms. Claybrook encouraged consumer editors and "Action Line" columnists and reporters of newspapers and radio and television stations throughout the country to inform their readers, listeners, and viewers of the Hotline number and the services available. In a related action, she has recently written to all Senators and Representatives about the Hotline so that they may make their constituents aware of the service.

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The experimental Hotline began operation in a 10-state area in October 1975. In July 1976, services were expanded to all states (except Hawaii and Alaska). Since its inception, the Hotline has provided recall information to many thousands of vehicle owners and assisted thousands more in getting motor vehicle problems resolved. On a normal workday, Hotline operators handle 150-200 calls; when a major recall or safety investigation is announced, the phones ring up to 500 times a day.

Motorists calling the Hotline should be prepared to provide the year, make, and model of their vehicle and its vehicle identification number. If a safety problem is being reported, a brief description of the problem, odometer mileage, and results of the problem also should be provided.

In addition to assisting consumers with their automotive problems, reports to the Hotline have contributed to investigations conducted by the agency and recalls of vehicles for correction of safety-related problems.

Hotline operators are on duty from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Eastern time, Monday through Friday. Calls made after hours or on weekends are recorded, and operators return the calls when they return to duty. The toll-free number is (800) 424-9393. Washington, D.C. residents should call 426-0123.

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CONSUMER ADVISORY

FOR RELEASE MONDAY
October 3, 1977

NHTSA 82-77 (BMA)
Tel. No. (202) 426-0670

FORD RECALLS 1977-1978 VEHICLES
BECAUSE OF CARBURETOR DEFECT

The recall of an estimated 16,000 Ford Motor Co. vehicles for correction of a carburetor problem that could result in the inability of a driver to control the speed of the vehicle was announced today by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

The recall involves certain 1978 model Ford, Mercury, Lincoln and Mark V passenger cars; 1977 and 1978 E-250-350 Econolines and Club Wagons; and 1977 and 1978 F-150-250-350 light trucks. All are equipped with 460 CID engines and 4-barrel carburetors. The recall involves vehicles built between July 5, 1977 and Sept. 9, 1977.

Ford notified the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) of the defect on Sept. 21, and indicated that the problem involves the secondary throttle lever which may remain in the open position following a wide-open throttle application. The throttle is that part of the carburetor that controls the flow of fuel into the engine. A 4-barrel carburetor has two throttles, with the secondary throttle being activated in situations where more power is desired, as in passing.

Recall correction will involve inspection of suspect vehicles for the throttle hang-up condition and, where necessary, replacement of the carburetor. The manufacturer estimates that 18 percent of the vehicles being recalled contain the defect.

Since no date for recall action was furnished, and due to the serious nature of the problem, Joan Claybrook, NHTSA administrator, urged Ford to expedite recall action.

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In its report to the NHTSA, Ford said the condition is the result of misalignment during the process of die-casting the throttle body. The result is a mismatch condition which results in mechanical interference between the secondary throttle lever on the carburetor and the lever stop, and permits the secondary throttle plate to remain open. When this happens, the driver will be unable to control the speed of the vehicle.

Ms. Claybrook said that "until Ford corrects the defect, drivers of these vehicles are advised to avoid wide-open throttle applications." She also reminded motorists that if they should experience such a problem, "the vehicle may be stopped by turning the ignition switch OFF (but not to the LOCK position), or by placing the gear selector in neutral and applying the brakes."

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FOR RELEASE WEDNESDAY
October 5, 1977

NHTSA 83-77 (HP)
Tel. No. (202) 426-9550

TRAFFIC FATALITIES RISE IN AUGUST

Traffic fatalities in the United States rose again in August, the third straight month that deaths on the nation's highways showed an increase over the same period a year ago, the U.S. Department of Transportation said today.

The number of persons killed in traffic accidents in August is estimated at 4,463, an increase of 3 percent or 122 more than the 4,341 fatalities reported in August 1976.

The totals are based on preliminary figures reported to the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) by the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Joan Claybrook, administrator of the federal safety agency, said she was disappointed that all three summer months produced higher traffic tolls than a year ago. "If motorists exercised more care in observing the basic traffic rules, particularly the 55-mile-per-hour national speed limit, and took the simple step of buckling their safety belts, we could have seen reductions in June, July and August, instead of the increases during that period," she noted.

Despite the rise, the nation's traffic fatalities for the first eight months of 1977 held about even with the corresponding period of a year ago. The number of persons killed through August 31 is estimated at 29,804, just 56 more than the 29,748 deaths recorded during the January through August period of 1976.

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CONSUMER ADVISORY

FOR RELEASE TUESDAY
October 18, 1977

NHTSA 86-77 (BMA)
Tel. No. (202) 426-0670

FORD RECALLS 1978
FAIRMONTS AND ZEPHYRS

The U.S. Department of Transportation today announced that certain 1978 model Ford Fairmont and Mercury Zephyr automobiles are being recalled for correction of a transmission shift linkage problem that could result in the vehicle rolling free when the gear selector is placed in the "Park" position.

The recall involves an estimated 41,000 vehicles built prior to September 29, 1977, equipped with automatic transmissions with the shifting lever mounted on the steering column.

The Ford Motor Co. notified the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration of the defect on October 6, and indicated that the problem involves improper adjustment of the automatic transmission shift linkage. On some of these vehicles, when the shift lever is placed in the "Park" position, the parking pawl in the transmission may not engage securely. If the vehicle operator shifts into "Park" upon parking his vehicle but fails to engage the parking brake, the vehicle could roll free, endangering persons and property.

Joan Claybrook, NHTSA administrator, said that "most of the affected vehicles should still be in the hands of dealers," and that before introduction of these new models to the public, dealers were informed that "none of the affected vehicles were to be sold or delivered or driven on the public roads until shift linkage adjustment has been performed and the adjustment verified."

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"Nevertheless," Ms. Claybrook added, "there is still a possibility that some of these vehicles may be sold without the necessary corrections being made and motorists who purchase these vehicles should ask their dealers whether their vehicles were subject to this recall and whether recall corrections were made."

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CONSUMER ADVISORY

FOR RELEASE WEDNESDAY
October 19, 1977

NHTSA 87-77 (BMA)
Tel. No. (202) 426-0670

BRITISH LEYLAND, FORD
DEFECT INVESTIGATIONS

Two new investigations of alleged safety defects involving an estimated 52,000, 1970-1974 MG Midgets manufactured by British Leyland Motors and more than 145,000, 1971-1972 Mercury Capris manufactured in Germany by the Ford Motor Co. were announced today by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

The department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) said the MG Midget investigation concerns the possibility of the throttle sticking due to a binding condition or lack of lubrication. When the throttle sticks, engine speed can remain at the speed reached by the motorist. This could result in accident and injury due to the driver being unable to control the speed of the vehicle. To date, no accidents or injuries have been reported as a result of this problem.

The investigation was initiated after receipt of a letter from the Center for Auto Safety citing four incidents of this type. Information obtained from the manufacturer indicates that over 15,000 replacement cables were supplied to dealers. These were used for replacement of cables as part of normal warranty servicing, and as replacement parts for use when problems developed after warranty expiration.

-more-

Joan Claybrook, NHTSA Administrator, said that "this high ratio of replacement parts to vehicles produced seems to indicate that this problem is prevalent." She added that "sometimes a driver may get a warning of the potential problem due to increased pressure required on the accelerator pedal." If such a symptom is noted, owners should have their vehicles checked by their dealers immediately.

If a motorist experiences this problem while driving, the ignition should be turned OFF (but not to LOCK), and the brakes should be applied while guiding the vehicle to the shoulder of the roadway. Another alternative is to shift to neutral (or depress the clutch and keep it depressed) while applying the brakes.

The investigation of 1971-1972 Mercury Capri vehicles involves the possibility that the headlight switches may fail while driving at night.

The investigation was initiated after receipt of a complaint from Mr. Charles V. Ware of Richmond, Va., the owner of a 1972 Capri, who sent in several defective switches. He claimed he experienced three failures while driving at night and narrowly avoided accidents on two occasions. A check of NHTSA complaint files disclosed two similar complaints involving 1971 Mercury Capris and two complaints involving the 1972 model. A nearly identical switch was used in both models.

Information obtained from the manufacturer indicates that 66,493 vehicles of the 1971 model year were sold in the U.S.; 80,584 replacement switches were distributed. Sales of the 1972 model were 79,397, with 72,449 replacement switches being distributed. The ratio of replacement switches to vehicles produced indicates this problem is prevalent.

To date, no accidents or injuries have been reported as a result of this problem. The reason for failure is unknown, and there are no known pre-failure symptoms.

The safety agency chief reminded motorists that if they experience such failures, they should still have brake lights and signal lights, and that the turn signals should be used to warn other motorists of their intention to move off the highway.

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FOR RELEASE WEDNESDAY
October 19, 1977

NHTSA 88-77 (BMA)
Tel. No. (202) 426-0670

MACK RECALLS 48,000 TRUCKS
FOR FLEX-FAN REPLACEMENT

The recall of an estimated 48,000 Mack trucks for replacement of engine cooling fans was announced today by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

The recall involves certain 1973-1977 models equipped with the Mack 6-cylinder engines, air-conditioning, and flex-fans, and manufactured between November 1972 and May 2, 1977.

Joan Claybrook, administrator of the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), said "the recall is the direct result of our inquiry to Mack Trucks, Inc., after review of a service bulletin issued by the manufacturer dealing with the installation of a fixed blade engine cooling fan as a replacement for flex blade fans that failed in service. We are very concerned about failures of this type," she added, "and our on-going investigation of flex-fan failures has already led to recalls of various model Ford Motor Co. and American Motors Corp. vehicles."

Although the NHTSA has no record of complaints, injuries or accidents resulting from flex-fan failures in Mack trucks, information provided by the manufacturer to the NHTSA indicated 56 complaints, 868 field service reports, and 2,017 warranty claims concerning the breaking or cracking of flex-fans in these vehicles. The manufacturer also reported that there have been no reports of either injuries or deaths attributed to flex-fans used in Mack trucks.

-more-

Although no specific date has been announced, it is expected that the recall will occur soon. In the meantime, Ms. Claybrook repeated her earlier warning to owners of vehicles equipped with flex fans that "data available to us from our on-going investigation indicate that this type of fan can seriously injure and kill."

The NHTSA investigation of flex-fan failure involves 1970 through 1977 Ford Motor Co. passenger cars and light trucks equipped with flex fans; of these certain 1972, 1976, and 1977 models have been recalled. However, the investigation is continuing to determine whether other models and model years should be recalled. In addition, because this type of fan was also used by other domestic vehicle manufacturers, data was requested from the American Motors Corp., Chrysler Corp., and the General Motors Corp., regarding failures, accidents, and injuries involving flex-fans used in their vehicles. This request resulted in a decision by AMC to recall an estimated 26,500, 1976 Matadors.

Ms. Claybrook reminded vehicle owners that the flex-fan has curved blades which flex and flatten out when engine operating speed is increased, and that this constant flexing of the blades can result in metal fatigue which causes the blades to crack and break off. These broken blades can be propelled, with great velocity, in any direction.

The NHTSA administrator warned owners of these Mack vehicles, as well as service personnel, that until the engine fan is replaced, avoid working on the engine or standing anywhere near it if the hood is up and the engine is running. This recall involves the following specific model designations: CF, DM, DMM, F, HMM, R, RD, RM, U, FL, FS, RL, RS, WL, and WS.

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October 20, 1977

NHTSA -- 85-77 (HP)
Tel. 202-426-9550

DOT AWARDS CONTRACTS
FOR ACCIDENT DATA COLLECTION

The establishment of a nationwide system of teams of technicians to collect data on motor vehicle accidents was announced today by the U. S. Department of Transportation with the award of contracts totaling more than $3.6 million.

The awards, to fund a three-year field effort known as the National Accident Sampling System (NASS), went to 10 contractors in nine states.

The accident investigation teams, consisting of three to five people, will work with state, county and local police, hospitals, emergency medical personnel, tow operators and other organizations in selected areas of the country.

NASS is designed to help the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) identify specific accident problems and patterns, and to assist in the design of effective countermeasures.

Joan Claybrook, the administrator of the federal safety agency, said NASS "will produce nationally representative accident data with sufficient accuracy and detail to provide an objective means of setting and evaluating many motor vehicle and highway safety standards. It also will enable us to conduct special studies on pressing safety problems in a timely and cost-effective manner."

The contractors chosen, the NASS sites, and the funds awarded include:

IIT Research Institute, Chicago, $478,858
Kappa Systems, Inc., Ft. Lauderdale/Hollywood City, Fla., $329,453
Franklin Institute, Delaware County, Pa., $372,941
Southwest Research Institute, Dallas County, Tex., $334,487
University of Montevallo, Shelby and St. Clair Counties, Ala., $418,115

- more -

Management Engineers, Inc., Erie County, Pa., $330,007
State of Michigan, Muskegon County, Mich., $361,185
KLD Associates, Inc., Ulster County, N. Y., $337,129
Texas Transportation Institute, Drew, Lincoln, Desha, Chicot and Ashley Counties, Ark., $314,254
University of Southern California, Skagit, San Juan and Island Counties, Wash., $378,983

The accident investigation teams will collect data on selected accidents under the control of two regional zone centers that will assure quality, accuracy and the completeness of the data.

The northern regional center will be operated by Calspan Corp. of Buffalo, N.Y. under a $312,733 contract, and the southern regional center will be run by Indiana University under a $307,171 contract. Both of these contracts, covering a two-year span, were awarded last month.

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CONSUMER ADVISORY

FOR RELEASE FRIDAY
October 21, 1977

NHTSA 90-77 (BMA)
Tel: (202) 426-0670

NEW DOT FACT SHEET ADVISES ON BRAKE FLUIDS

The publication of a revised fact sheet to advise motorists on "Brake Fluids" was announced today by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

The fact sheet, available without charge to the motoring public, was prepared by the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

Joan Claybrook, NHTSA Administrator, said that "with service stations continuing to convert to no-service, gas-and-go operations, many more motorists are checking the fluid levels in their vehicles themselves and adding fluids when necessary," she said. "While this is a relatively simple operation," she added, "the motorist who is not knowledgeable or is careless can damage the brake system and jeopardize his or her life by adding the wrong type of fluid or permitting the system to become contaminated by such things as moisture and grit."

The fact sheet describes the types of brake fluids available and their use, federal labeling and coloring requirements designed to minimize the possibility of adding the wrong fluid to a brake system, the dangers of brake system contamination, and a list of "DO's and DONT's" to be followed in checking and adding brake fluid.

The general public may obtain single copies of this fact sheet, without charge, by writing to the General Services Division/Distribution, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 400 Seventh St., SW, Washington, D.C. 20590.

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Brake Fluids

Consumer Services Fact Sheet

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
Washington, D.C. 20590

SEPTEMBER 1977*

Qualified brake mechanics are hard to find. Service stations are continuing to convert to no-service, gas-and-go operations. The costs of professional brake services have continued their sharp rise. The result has been an increase in the number of repairs by do-it-yourselfers.

Many repairs involve the opening of the master cylinder and the adding of brake fluid. This *Fact Sheet* describes the various types of brake fluids available, and certain procedures that should be followed for the safety and reliability of your brake system.

THE BRAKE FLUID STANDARD

Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (FMVSS) No. 116, "Hydraulic Brake Fluids," contains requirements for fluid performance testing and container labeling. It provides for the classification of hydraulic brake fluids by type (DOT 3, DOT 4, and DOT 5) and requires that each type of fluid, manufactured as of Sept. 1, 1978, be of a specific color. Precise package labeling and fluid color coding are designed to minimize the possibility of adding the wrong fluid to a brake system.

At present, the safety standard covers labeling and color, but not performance requirements, for hydraulic system mineral oils (HSMO). These are used only in a few cars imported from one manufacturer (Citroen). Performance requirements will be added when problems with the current development of an international standard for HSMO have been resolved.

One of the most important performance requirements of a brake fluid is that its boiling point be well above the high temperatures which may occur in braking system components during hard repetitive braking. DOT 3 and DOT 4 fluids absorb moisture while in a brake system. This lowers their boiling point. The standard specifies a minimum boiling point for each fluid type with a standard quantity of added water. It is called its wet boiling point.

Brake fluids must also remain liquid at low temperatures. The standard specifies the maximum viscosity (thickness) permitted at minus 40°F for each type of fluid.

Several other laboratory tests are required to assure proper operation of brake fluids. A test is specified for compatibility of the fluid with the rubber components in brake systems. Another example is a test for corrosiveness.

Detailed labeling requirements are included in the standard. They include proper identification of fluid type and its "wet" boiling point plus warnings on the selection and use of brake fluids and HSMO's.

The newly added fluid color coding requirement will eventually help to identify the different fluids to frequent users in repair facilities. Shops often use pressure bleeder vessels or other containers that may not be properly labeled. For some time, however, fluids in such unmarked containers should be compared in color with those in labeled stock containers for type identification. Brake fluids manufactured before Sept. 1, 1978, may not be of the required colors, and may be sold until supplies are exhausted. This will take several years.

DANGERS OF CONTAMINATION

Since DOT 3 and DOT 4 type fluids readily absorb moisture from air, they must be stored in tightly closed containers. Moisture promotes rusting of the inner walls of brake calipers and cylinders. This in time will cause failure of those components. The degradation time varies with humidity, temperature and large daily temperature changes, and with the frequency of use of the vehicle.

Moisture in brake fluid also lowers its boiling point. Repetitive braking on a long downgrade can produce enough heat to cause it to boil in wheel cylinders or calipers. The resulting vapor is compressible. Much of the force normally applied to the shoes and pads is lost in compressing the vapor. The loss of braking force could result in an accident. Because the quantity of moisture absorbed by DOT 3 and DOT 4 fluids varies with time and conditions, it is difficult to decide how long to leave such fluids in brake systems before changing them. Eight European vehicle owners' manuals recommend brake fluid changes periodically. The period varies from one to four years, with an average of two.

DOT 5 fluids need not be periodically replaced since they absorb practically no moisture. This type is, however, more expensive. So far only one specialty car, which is made in small quantities, is filled with this fluid originally. Two or more European manufacturers

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*Revision of Fact Sheet dated January, 1972, "Safety Tips on the Purchase and Use of Hydraulic Brake Fluids."

are testing it on the road. The U.S. Army is running its second field test. If the results confirm those of previous tests, DOT 5 may be specified for all military vehicles with hydraulic brakes. Note, however, that to obtain all of the advantages of DOT 5 in vehicles that now contain DOT 3 or DOT 4, all traces of the old fluid must be removed from the system. Wheel cylinders are difficult to purge. They should be rebuilt with new parts or replaced. Also, adding DOT 5 to a system that contains DOT 3 or DOT 4 will not alter the moisture already absorbed.

Particles of grit and other solid materials in brake fluid will cause rapid wear of the rubber cups and seals and score the cylinder walls to cause leakage. Such particles are dropped into a master cylinder reservoir when its cover is not cleaned before removal. Dispensing brake fluid from other than original containers with clean tops is another possible source of both solid and liquid contaminants.

TYPES OF FLUIDS

DOT 3—is the conventional, widely used type that has previously been identified as SAE 70R2 and, more recently, SAE J1703. Its wet boiling point, as packaged, must be at least 284°F in a specified test. Its color will be *clear* to *amber* when manufactured after August of 1978.

DOT 4—is similar to DOT 3, but was developed to meet the higher temperatures in some disc brake calipers. Its minimum wet boiling point is specified as 311°F. It absorbs moisture at a slower rate than DOT 3. Its color will also be *clear* to *amber*.

DOT 5—is a newer brake fluid. It is usually a silicone fluid with additives, and absorbs relatively little moisture. It has the highest specified minimum wet boiling point (356°F) of the three types. It also performs at arctic temperatures. It has about twice the liquidity (half the viscosity) of the other fluids at minus 40°F. Its color will be purple.

Hydraulic System Mineral Oil—is significantly different from DOT 3, 4, and 5 fluids. It is now and will continue to be *green* in color. It is used in specially designed central hydraulic control systems that include the braking function.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT FLUID

The correct fluid for safe use in your brake system is the one specified in the owner's manual or its equivalent DOT fluid. So, check your owner's manual and follow its recommendations. Pay close attention to the labels on brake fluid containers. *WARNING:* The mixing of brake fluid with mineral oil, or the substitution of one for the other may cause dangerous deterioration of critical rubber parts in your brake system.

If you are uncertain as to what type of substitute brake fluid to use in your vehicle, check with an authorized vehicle dealer to be certain that a contemplated substitute fluid can be used in your vehicle without causing early deterioration of brake components. DOT 5 fluid may usually be substituted for DOT 3 or DOT 4, but not for HSMO.

DO'S AND DON'T's

Do **read** the warnings printed on the container.

Do **clean** the master cylinder reservoir cover before removing it to check fluid level.

Do **remember** that an empty reservoir or a very low fluid level usually indicates leakage. Repair should be made immediately.

Do **add** the type of brake fluid recommended by the vehicle manufacturer.

Do **replace** rubber components and thoroughly clean calipers and cylinders when substituting DOT 5 for DOT 3 or DOT 4. This, plus system flushing, eliminates traces of the old fluid. Cylinders or calipers with scored or corroded inner walls should be replaced.

Do **replace** DOT 3 or DOT 4 brake fluid according to the maintenance schedule recommended by the vehicle manufacturer. DOT 5 fluids need not be replaced under ordinary circumstances. Some vehicle manufacturers also recommend replacement of rubber cups and seals periodically.

DO **store** unused brake fluid in its original container tightly closed.

Don't **open** the cover of a master cylinder reservoir if water may drip into it from a wet hood.

Don't **add** mineral oil or other engine fluids to your master cylinder when the brake fluid level is low.

Don't **add** brake fluid to a system that requires hydraulic system mineral oil.

Don't **add** a brake fluid with a lower boiling point than that of the fluid recommended by the vehicle manufacturer.

Don't **reuse** any fluid that has been bled or drained from a brake system.

Don't **add** any fluid that has been stored without being tightly closed.

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CONSUMER ADVISORY

FOR RELEASE TUESDAY
October 25, 1977

NHTSA 89-77 (IHC)
Tel. No. (202) 426-0670

TRIUMPH CABLE RECALL

The U.S. Department of Transportation reported today approximately 5,000 of the 1975 and 1976 TR-7 automobiles will be recalled by British Leyland Motors, Inc., to correct defective accelerator cables.

The recall, prompted by the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) which has been investigating accelerator cable problems in the TR-7's since July, will provide for replacement accelerator cables which link the accelerator pedal to the carburetor. The problem originally was brought to NHTSA's attention by the Center for Auto Safety.

British Leyland has already replaced approximately 15,000 cables in 1975 and 1976 TR-7's under a quality assurance program. After the NHTSA began its investigation, British Leyland decided to replace the cables as a safety recall campaign.

Administrator Joan Claybrook stated, "I am advising the motor vehicle industry that any attempt to avoid statutory responsibility for conducting a safety recall by conducting a less rigorous product improvement campaign will be considered a violation of the Safety Act and may result in injunctive sanctions and civil penalties."

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Concerning the British Leyland recall, Ms. Claybrook repeated an earlier warning to owners issued when the agency's investigation was announced. "A partial cable failure may cause the accelerator to stick in the open position. A complete failure will result in the loss of engine power. Either failure is extremely dangerous. Drivers experiencing the partial failure should shift into NEUTRAL or turn the ignition to OFF (not to the LOCK position because it will lock the steering)."

There have been four reported accidents associated with the cable defect, but no injuries. There is no known interim repair that will eliminate the problem.

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FOR RELEASE MONDAY
October 31, 1977

NHTSA 92-77 (RC)
Tel: 202-426-9550

NEWAY RECALLS
TRAILER SUSPENSION SYSTEMS

A request by U.S. Department of Transportation investigators has resulted in voluntary recall by Neway Division, Muskegon, Mich., of its AR III Trailer Air Ride Suspension systems.

Nuts and bolts attaching the systems to the vehicle frames have been subjected to loosening that could cause dangerous control problems or tire fires, the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Agency warned.

NHTSA opened a formal safety defect investigation of the problem, after agency engineers reviewed a Neway service bulletin that notified trailer manufacturers of the problem. The decision to announce a voluntary recall campaign followed contact with the company and disclosure of investigative findings by the federal safety agency.

Joan Claybrook, NHTSA administrator, pointed out that the suggestions in the company's service bulletin on the problem were impractical to apply since the bulletin recommended that drivers of these tractor/trailer "rigs" visually examine the nuts and bolts on the suspect units every 1,000 miles and tighten them if loose.

"No big rig driver logging several thousand miles weekly across this country can be expected to have the time to personally check this problem every 1,000 miles. These people are paid to drive, not make repairs on the side of the road, which could be dangerous in itself. And in most cases they wouldn't even have the necessary wrench. Neway's decision for a recall to replace the bad parts is the only sensible solution to this problem."

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Basically, the problem involves a nut and bolt combination that attaches the Neway suspension system to the frame of the trailer. Loosening of the nut can create excessive play that could lead to handling problems with the trailer. Loss of the nut permits the bolt to unfasten to a point where it can contact an inside tire and cause a fire.

An estimated 5,318 trailers are equipped with these Neway manufactured systems across the country. So far, NHTSA has not received any complaints of accidents or injuries from trailer operators because of the suspension system problem.

"Until the manufacturer completes the recall campaign," Ms. Claybrook said, "the best protection for tractor/trailer operators is for the drivers to make frequent inspections of these units and immediate reports to their maintenance departments of any problems discovered.

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CONSUMER ADVISORY

FOR RELEASE TUESDAY
November 1, 1977

NHTSA 94-77 (BMA)
Tel.No. (202) 426-0670

1975-1978 CADILLACS RECALLED
FOR POTENTIAL FIRE PROBLEM

The government today reminded owners of 1975 through 1978 Cadillacs equipped with electronic fuel injection systems that the vehicles have been recalled for correction of a leakage problem in the fuel system which could result in engine compartment fires.

The recall involves an estimated 111,000 Sevilles and 22,000 DeVille and Eldorado models equipped with electronic fuel injection systems and includes 1975, 1976, 1977, and early 1978 models.

The reminder was issued by the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), which had been gathering data on the problem for several months and had opened a formal defect investigation just prior to receiving word from General Motors of it's decision to recall the vehicles.

The investigation began after the NHTSA reviewed a Dealer Product Campaign Bulletin published by General Motors Corp. several months ago. The bulletin, and an accompanying letter sent to 941 owners of 1975 Cadillacs with electronic fuel injected engines, concerned the replacement of a fuel hose because of leakage which could result in engine compartment fires. The investigation was later expanded to 1976 and 1977 models which have similar fuel injection systems.

-more-

Joan Claybrook, NHTSA Administrator, warned that vehicle fires can be quite dangerous. "A driver who suspects a fire should immediately stop the automobile, get out, and move to a safe distance, she said. "Unless trained in fire fighting and equipped with a fire extinguisher appropriate for gasoline fires, people should not try to put out these fires." Ms. Claybrook added that people can be seriously burned trying to fight automobile fires.

NHTSA said it had received three owner complaints plus a report from the Dade County (Florida) Fire Department on 16 fires in late model Cadillacs. There have been no reports of accidents or injuries. The manufacturer said it has received seven reports alleging minor injuries.

Information provided by the manufacturer indicates that the fuel hose connections to the engine fuel rail, and fuel hose connections between the gas tank and the fuel rail, may leak because of hose deterioration.

The recall will involve installation of a new, all-metal type connection between the fuel pressure regulator and the fuel rail in the engine compartment on vehicles not so equipped, and replacement of all fuel hoses on the pressure side of the fuel system. Prior to availability of the all-metal type connection parts, involved owners will be requested to bring in their vehicles for the installation of a new rubber hose connection until it can be replaced by the all-metal type.

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CONSUMER ADVISORY

FOR RELEASE WEDNESDAY
November 2, 1977

NHTSA 95-77 (BMA)
Tel: (202) 426-0670

DOT WARNS OF TRANSMISSION PROBLEM IN 1973-1978 FORD VEHICLES

The government today warned motorists of possible transmission problems with certain 1973 through 1978 Ford Motor Co. passenger cars.

When the shifting lever is placed in "PARK" position, vibration from a running engine or a slammed door can cause the transmission to jump into "REVERSE" gear. If the driver has left the vehicle, it could move backward by itself, causing accidents, injuries or property damage.

The warning came from the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), which has opened a formal defect investigation (Case C8-02) into the matter.

Involved in this investigation are an estimated two million Ford, Mercury, and Lincoln passenger cars equipped with automatic transmissions with the shifting lever mounted on the steering column, which have 351 cubic inch and larger engines.

Joan Claybrook, NHTSA Administrator, said "an automobile moving under power without a driver can be exceptionally hazardous, particularly to pedestrians and to children." She cautioned that no car should be left with its engine running unattended, and warned drivers of the cars under investigation "to turn off the engine and set the parking brake in addition to putting the transmission in the "park" position when leaving the vehicle."

"more-

The investigation was initiated after the NHTSA received two reports from the Center for Auto Safety indicating one injury and one fatality allegedly caused by this problem. Combined data from NHTSA, the Center for Auto Safety, and material provided by the manufacturer indicate 31 owner complaints regarding this problem, all involving accidents. These reports indicate a total of 14 injuries and one fatality allegedly due to vehicles jumping into "REVERSE."

The problem is apparently due to excess play in the linkage between the shifting lever and the transmission, which allows an improper indication on the gear shift indicator. The problem seems to be aggravated by hot engine temperatures, hot weather, or both. The only known pre-failure symptom is an improper indication on the gear shift indicator. For example, the indicator may point to "NEUTRAL" when the transmission is in some other position, or the indicator may rest somewhere between two of the positions on the indicator scale.

All owners of these vehicles who have experienced this problem are requested to report the details, in writing, to the Office of Defects Investigation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 400 Seventh St., SW, Washington, D.C. 20590. The problem may also be reported to the NHTSA Auto Safety Hotline by calling, toll-free, (800)424-9393 (for Washington D.C. residents the number is 426-0123).

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CONSUMER ADVISORY

FOR RELEASE WEDNESDAY
November 2, 1977

NHTSA 96-77
Tel. No. (202) 426-0670

INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER RECALLS 20,000 HEAVY TRUCKS

The International Harvester Co. is recalling more than 20,000 1975-1977 heavy trucks to replace unsafe front axle aluminum wheel hubs, the U.S. Department of Transportation said today.

The recall campaign is the result of an investigation the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has been conducting since early July. Under the recall, International Harvester is replacing the aluminum hubs with steel hubs on 11,419 Transtar, Cargostar, CONCO, Fleetstar, Loadstar and S-Series trucks with 12,000 and 13,500 pound front axles and 10,561 of the same models with 9,000 and 10,800 pound front axles.

NHTSA administrator Joan Claybrook cautioned that the early warning signs of this problem are oil leaks on wheel rims or tires. "A failure will probably be accompanied by noise, wheel vibration and difficulty in steering," Ms. Claybrook noted. "Failure to heed these warning signs could result in loss of a wheel and a dangerous crash situation."

The replacement steel hubs will be provided to owners at no charge by International Harvester dealers. According to the company, parts will be available on Dec. 15 and recall notification letters will be sent to owners on or about Nov. 23. The safety agency reported it knows of no accidents or injuries that have occurred as a result of this problem.

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FOR RELEASE THURSDAY
November 3, 1977

NHTSA 97-77 (HP)
Tel. No. (202) 426-9550

DOT WITHDRAWS PROPOSED CHANGES IN BUMPER STANDARD

Proposals issued last June to delay tougher requirements in the federal standard on passenger car bumpers have been withdrawn, the U.S. Department of Transportation announced today.

The proposals involved three alternative amendments, two of which would have delayed the effective date of the more stringent second-phase requirements of the standard from the 1980 to the 1981 model year. A third alternative would have delayed the more rigid requirements indefinitely. Two of the amendments also would have established a consumer information program on bumper damageability.

The department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) said the decision to withdraw the proposals was based on an analysis of the comments presented at a public hearing July 29 which showed that a delay in the effective date of the Phase II requirements was not justified.

The primary goal of the bumper standard, which was mandated by Congress in the Motor Vehicle Information and Cost Savings Act, is to reduce the cost of low-speed collisions. It incorporates the requirements currently contained in Standard 215, which since the 1974 model year has required passenger car bumpers to withstand crashes of 5 miles per hour, both front and rear, without damage to safety systems, such as lighting, fuel, exhaust, braking, steering, cooling and latching.

-more-

Issued in March 1976, the new standard not only prohibits damage to safety systems but also to all vehicle surfaces except for the bumper in 5 m.p.h. front and rear-end crashes, beginning with cars manufactured in the 1979 model year.

The second-phase requirements of the standard, scheduled to take effect in the 1980 model year, further limit damage to the bumper face bar to 3/8-inch dents and limit overall bumper set to 3/4-inch. Bumper set is the overall flattening of the bumper face bar.

Information submitted by the automobile manufacturers indicates that consumers will have to pay on the average about $6 to $10 more for a vehicle equipped with Phase II bumpers than they will for a vehicle with Phase I bumpers. This cost increase is expected to be far outweighed by the benefits of the more damage resistant bumper systems.

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FOR RELEASE FRIDAY
November 4, 1977

NHTSA -- 93-77 (HP)
Tel. 202-426-9550

TESTS SHOW IMPROVEMENTS
IN AIR BAG SYSTEMS

The release of test reports showing dramatic improvements in air bag restraint systems that protect front seat occupants in crashes was announced today by the U. S. Department of Transportation.

The tests involved both head-on and offset crashes between cars traveling at closing speeds above 80 miles per hour. This is approximately equivalent to a car being crashed into a fixed barrier at 40 m.p.h.

In the crashes, air bags installed in production compact Volvo sedans provided better protection than earlier production air bags in full-size 1973 Chevrolets in similar crashes at a closing speed of only 60 m.p.h.

Secretary Brock Adams' occupant crash protection standard requires all new full-sized passenger cars to provide front seat occupants with automatic protection in crashes into a fixed barrier at 30 m.p.h., beginning with 1982 models. Similar protection is required in compact and intermediate cars beginning with 1983 models and in subcompacts in the 1984 model year.

The recent tests, which showed air bag systems to be effective in a wide variety of crashes, were conducted for the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) by Dynamic Science Inc., of Phoenix, Ariz.

"These latest crash tests clearly indicate the efficacy of advanced restraint systems in protecting occupants of small cars," said Joan Claybrook, the NHTSA administrator. "The level of protection reached in these tests far exceeds the level required by the passive protection standard."

- more -

In one series of tests, Volvos that had been driven more than 50,000 miles and equipped with production (1975 technology) air bags, were crashed into other Volvos at a closing speed of 60 m.p.h. The tests involved both head-on collisions and collisions where the cars are offset. In the offset condition, the cars strike each other so the driver of one car is directly in line with the driver of the other car.

The production air bag system provided levels of protection which far exceeded the occupant protection standard for both the driver and passenger occupants (dummies were used in all tests) in head-on, driver-to-driver offset, and passenger-to-passenger offset tests.

In a second series of tests, 1976 Volvos were tested in order to determine if even higher levels of protection were possible through the use of more advanced technology air bag systems.

These systems, developed by Minicars, Inc. for one of the NHTSA Research Safety Vehicles, were tested in a variety of crash modes. Although the air bags are experimental, they are practical and could be manufactured in quantity for production cars within the lead time provided in the standard. The 1976 Volvos were structurally modified to permit the installation of the air bags.

Test results demonstrated that these air bags could provide protection at closing speeds up to 90 m.p.h. in head-on collisions, the approximate equivalent of a car crashing into a fixed barrier at 45 m.p.h., and at a closing speed of 80 m.p.h. in offset collisions.

The tests also showed excellent protection in angular/frontal collisions of equivalent closing speeds. All the dummy occupants used in the crash tests were unbelted.

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CONSUMER ADVISORY

FOR RELEASE FRIDAY
November 11, 1977

NHTSA -- 99-77 (RC)
Tel. 202-426-9550

DOT FIGHTS MILEAGE FRAUD WITH RECORD-KEEPING PROPOSAL

Consumer protection against fraudulent auto odometer claims will be strengthened under a new record-keeping proposal announced today by the U. S. Department of Transportation.

Current laws under the Motor Vehicle Information and Cost Savings Act, administered by the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), prohibit tampering with vehicle odometers to conceal true mileage, and require the seller to file a disclosure statement to the buyer.

The disclosure statement requires the seller to give the buyer a signed statement containing the odometer mileage reading at the time of transfer; the date of the transfer; the address of the seller; and a description of the vehicle.

Under the new proposal, which would be an invaluable "investigatory tool," NHTSA said, dealers and distributors of vehicles would not only be required to provide odometer mileage statements, but also would have to retain for four years a record of the recorded mileage of the vehicle when purchased, and the mileage when sold to a new purchaser.

Retention of this document for this period, NHTSA said, would not only provide the government and other parties with the necessary documentation to prove a violation of the law, but would help pinpoint exactly where that violation occurred.

Interested parties are invited to submit comments on the proposal by Dec. 5. These comments should be identified as Docket No. 77-06, and addressed to the Docket Section, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Room 5108, 400 Seventh Street SW, Washington, D. C. 20590.

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Washington, D.C. 20590

FOR RELEASE MONDAY
November 14, 1977

NHTSA -- 91-77
Tel. 202-426-9550

MONTHLY

COMPLIANCE REPORT

FOR AUGUST 1977

Copies of the Compliance Test Reports listed in this summary are available for viewing in the Technical Reference Division, Room 5108, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 400 7th Street, S.W., Washington, D. C.

Reproduced copy of any page, or an entire report, may be purchased at the above address in accordance with the fee schedule prescrobed by Part 7, 40 CFR (Public Availability of Information). Basically, the fee is established at 25¢ for the first page and 5¢ for each additional page.

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FOR RELEASE MONDAY
November 14, 1977

NHTSA -- 98-77 (RC)
Tel. 202-426-9550

TRAFFIC FATALITIES RISE IN SEPTEMBER

Traffic fatalities increased nationwide this September for the fourth straight month this year, the U. S. Department of Transportation said today.

An increase of 5 percent was recorded for highway deaths which reached 4,198 in September, as compared to 3,985 fatalities listed for the same month of last year.

The totals are based on preliminary figures reported to the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) by the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

"I am naturally disappointed in this gain," said Joan Claybrook, administrator of the federal safety agency," since it follows so closely the increases recorded during the vacation travel season of June, July, and August. Yet, I am firmly convinced that our annual fatality rate for this year will remain low, despite the greater number of vehicles and drivers on the road. The keys to reducing this level even further are simply to observe basic traffic rules, particularly the 55-mile-per-hour national speed limit, and the simple act of buckling safety belts. These measures would have significantly reduced our fatality figures for the past three months, and they can certainly do so in the future."

Although the monthly figures showed an increase, NHTSA said, the nation's traffic fatalities for the first nine months of 1977 were very close to the corresponding period of a year ago. Highway deaths counted through September 30 are estimated at 34,002, less than a 1 percent increase over the estimated total of 33,733 for the January through September period of 1976.

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CONSUMER ADVISORY

FOR RELEASE TUESDAY
November 15, 1977

NHTSA 100-77(BMA)
Tel. No. (202) 426-0670

NHTSA ISSUES WARNING
OF FLOOR JACK FAILURES

The U.S. Department of Transportation today warned owners of a certain type of hydraulic floor roller jack, manufactured in Taiwan, that these jacks could fail when in the raised position, and a person working under the vehicle could be crushed.

The warning came from the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) which, in July, announced an investigation of the Model 646 Hydraulic Floor Roller Jack, manufactured in Taiwan for Hollywood Accessories, Compton, Calif. The investigation was based on consumer complaints alleging failure of the saddle leveling mechanism.

Joan Claybrook, NHTSA administrator said "Since this investigation was opened, we have learned of a number of other manufacturers as well as direct-buy retailers, who market jacks of almost identical design as the Hollywood Model 646. Thus far, six minor injuries have been reported, and owners of this type jack are urged to avoid using them, especially if work under the vehicle is required."

The jack is an aftermarket item normally used by vehicle owners who do their own maintenance, and by service stations and garages. It is sold through automotive supply houses, discount stores, and filling stations at prices ranging from $50 to $100.

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The jacks, all of which are manufactured in Taiwan, have an all-steel, wide body chassis, with steel front and rear casters. They are sold under a variety of trade names. The jack is rated at 3,000 pounds (1-1/2 tons). The saddle, which carries the load, is kept level by a lever mechanism on one side only. A maneuvering handle and swivel casters allow for positioning in a small radius. A quick-action release valve is activated by the handle.

The NHTSA requests all owners of these jacks who have experienced failures or malfunctions to report the details of their experience, in writing, to the Office of Defects Investigation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 400 Seventh St.,SW., Washington, D.C. 20590. These problems may also be reported to the NHTSA Auto Safety Hotline by calling, toll-free (800) 424-9393 (for Washington D.C. residents the number is 426-0123).

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CONSUMER ADVISORY

FOR RELEASE TUESDAY
November 15, 1977

NHTSA 101-77 (BMA)
Tel. No. (202) 426-0670

CHRYSLER VEHICLES RECALLED FOR BRAKE PROBLEM

The U.S. Department of Transportation today reminded owners of more than 1.2 million Chrysler Corp. cars that their vehicles are being recalled for two problems that could result in the loss of front wheel brakes.

The government urged owners to take their vehicles in for inspection and correction as soon as they receive their defect notification letters from the manufacturer.

The reminder was issued by the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, which identified the vehicles as 1976 through 1978 Plymouth Volares and Dodge Aspens manufactured from October 1975 through September 1977, and 1977 and 1978 Dodge Diplomats and Chrysler LeBarons manufactured from March 1977 through September 23, 1977.

According to information provided by the manufacturer, the front wheel brake tubes may be subject to corrosion from acid seeping from the battery. The front brake hoses may become brittle and crack when subjected to sustained periods of extreme cold temperatures. If either or both conditions exist, the brake tubes and/or brake hoses may fail, resulting in a possible loss of front wheel braking capability.

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The manufacturer also indicated that the rear wheel brakes are not affected, and that if trouble develops in either the front brake tubes or the brake hoses, the red warning light on the instrument panel will signal trouble. The rear brakes will continue to function and will stop the car. The company also suggests that as a precaution, prior to receipt of the recall notification letter, owners of the affected automobiles can inspect the brake tubes for evidence of corrosion at the rear of the battery cover, and can inspect the brake hoses for visual cracks to determine if either are in need of immediate attention.

Joan Claybrook, NHTSA administrator said that "even a partial loss of brakes is serious, since the stopping distance of the car will be greatly increased. I have urged the manufacturer to conduct this recall as soon as possible."

The manufacturer has indicated that all Volare, Aspen, LeBaron, and Diplomat models built prior to September 23, 1977, are being recalled for brake tube inspection. However, the brake hose problem does not involve 1977 models built after July 28, 1977, and does not involve 1978 models.

Corrective action will involve inspection of brake tubes for corrosion; replacement of brake tubes, if necessary; installation of protective shielding for the tubes; and inspection of brake hoses for cracks, with replacement where required.

No specific date was announced for the recall, but it is expected to occur soon.

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CONSUMER ADVISORY

FOR RELEASE TUESDAY
November 15, 1977

NHTSA 102-77 (BMA)
Tel. No. (202) 426-0670

72-73 CHRYSLER VEHICLES RECALLED FOR ELECTRICAL PROBLEM

The recall of an estimated 783,000 Chrysler Corp. cars for correction of a problem that could result in virtually complete loss of electrical power was announced today by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

The recall involves 1972 and some 1973 model Plymouth Fury, Dodge Polara and Monaco, and Chrysler passenger cars.

Joan Claybrook, administrator of the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), said "the recall is the direct result of our investigation of problems involving the bulkhead electrical connector in 1969 through 1973 Chrysler Corp. vehicles."

The defect involves the potential for interruption of the main electrical power feed circuit due to separation of a terminal connection. Such an interruption can occur suddenly, and can cause loss of engine power, lights, and other accessories which could result in loss of vehicle control or vehicle disablement.

Recall correction will involve repair of the engine compartment power feed circuit wire by installing an overlay wire routed around the bulkhead connector.

Owners of affected vehicles are urged to contact their dealers as soon as possible after receiving defect notification letters from the manufacturer.

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FOR RELEASE WEDNESDAY
November 16, 1977-----

NHTSA 104-77
Tel: (202) 426-9550

DOT ANNOUNCES PEDESTRIAN STUDY

The U.S. Department of Transportation has awarded a $1.1 million contract to Miami and Dade County, Florida for a five-year demonstration program designed to find the best methods of reducing urban pedestrian accidents, fatalities and injuries.

Terms of the contract, as administered by the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), call for the contractor to identify and analyze pedestrian safety problems; implement countermeasures developed by NHTSA, and show a significant reduction in pedestrian fatalities, injuries and accidents.

"It is our hope that this contract will have a far-reaching effect upon our annual highway fatality toll, for pedestrian deaths alone account for almost 20 percent of this annual total," said Joan Claybrook, administrator of the federal safety agency. "We have done a great deal of research in NHTSA on exactly how we can reduce this pedestrian toll, and once countermeasures can be implemented nationwide we expect the presently declining fatality rate to take another dramatic drop."

The decision to award the contract was based on the need for greater state and local participation, NHTSA said, since about 85 percent of the pedestrian accidents and 66 percent of the resultant fatalities occur in urban areas. In some large cities, pedestrian deaths account for approximately one half of the annual motor vehicle fatalities. New York City, for example, records pedestrian deaths as 51 percent of its annual traffic fatality total; Chicago, 41 percent; Philadelphia, 48 percent; Milwaukee, 44 percent; San Francisco, 47 percent; Washington, D.C., 50 percent; and Birmingham, Ala., 50 percent.

Seven distinct types of accidents have been identified as accounting for about 57 percent of urban pedestrian accidents, the federal safety agency said. The most common is the pedestrian who suddenly darts out into traffic. Miami and Dade county will analyze each of the accident types and seek "safety countermeasures." These include dart-out (33%), intersection dash (8%), vehicle turn-attention conflict (6%), multiple threat (3%), and vendor-ice cream truck (2%).

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FOR RELEASE THURSDAY
November 17, 1977

NHTSA 105-77 (HP)
Tel: 202-426-9550

NHTSA CHANGES RULEMAKING PROCEDURES

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) today announced changes in its rulemaking procedures, limiting the length of written comments on proposed rulemaking actions to 15 pages.

The federal safety agency, a unit of the Department of Transportation, said the 15-page limit will make it easier for NHTSA and the public to evaluate submissions to the docket by encouraging individuals or organizations to detail their primary arguments in a clear and brief manner.

There is no restriction, however, on the amount of supporting material that may be submitted along with the comments. The amendment to the rulemaking procedures is effective immediately.

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FOR RELEASE MONDAY
November 28, 1977

NHTSA -- 103-77 (BMA)
Tel. No. (202) 426-0670

DEFECT INVESTIGATORY CASES REPORT

The U. S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) issued its quarterly Defect Investigatory Cases Report today, listing all investigations opened or terminated between July and September, 1977. The report also includes a complete listing of all NHTSA defect investigations in progress as of Sept. 30.

The federal safety agency report lists 11 new investigations opened during the period, and four that were terminated after the manufacturer initiated recall action. It also lists a total of 65 active investigations, including five in which an initial or final defect determination has been made. NHTSA findings have been disputed by manufacturers in four of these cases and are currently in litigation.

One of the newly-opened investigations, Case C7-30, concerns chassis deterioration due to rusting in 1970-1977 Fiat 850, 124, and 128 automobiles. Corrosion damage has been reported in suspension components, wheel attaching points, steering components, and floor pans which support the seats. In many cases, advanced corrosion of vital chassis elements goes undetected until the cars finally become dangerous. This investigation, which originally involved 260,000 Fiats sold in the U.S. between 1970-1974, has been expanded to include models through 1977.

Case C7-31 concerns failure of the ignition amplifier on 1975-1977 Spitfire and TR-7 vehicles manufactured by British Leyland Motors of England. Failure of the ignition amplifier causes the cars to misfire, stall in traffic, and fail to restart. The investigation involves approximately 33,000 TR-7's and 20,000 Spitfires.

The same TR-7 vehicles are also the subject of an investigation involving throttle cable failures (Case C7-32). Failures may be partial or complete. In a partial failure, the accelerator may stick in an open position, reducing the driver's ability to control vehicle speed. A complete failure results in loss of engine power.

The NHTSA learned that British Leyland had replaced the throttle cables in many of those vehicles before the investigation was opened. The manufacturer has notified NHTSA of its intention to recall the remainder.

Case C7-33 concerns the alleged failure of the jack provided as original equipment on 1975-1977 Chevrolet and GMC C-10, P-10, G-20, and K-10 light duty trucks. NHTSA testing, after receipt of several consumer complaints alleging jack failure, disclosed that these jacks could bend and be deformed when used on irregular road surfaces or the shoulder of a road. It is a screw-type jack that has the appearance of a hydraulic jack and is positioned under the axle of the vehicle when the chassis must be raised. The investigation, which originally involved jacks provided with an estimated 1,169,050, 1975-1976 light trucks, has been expanded to include 1977 vehicles.

Another jack investigation (Case C7-34) involves the alleged failure of the saddle leveling mechanism on the Model 646 Hydraulic Floor Roller Jack manufactured in Taiwan for Hollywood Accessories, Compton, Calif. This type of jack is an after-market item normally used by service stations, garages, and vehicle owners who do their own maintenance. Allegedly, a pin in the saddle leveling mechanism fails if the load is not centered on the saddle, and the load can drop suddenly. The number of such jacks being used by consumers is unknown.

Vehicles manufactured by British Leyland Motors are the subject of two other investigations. Each involves approximately 185,000 vehicles.

Case C7-36 concerns windshield wiper malfunctions in 1969 through 1976 Triumph Spitfire, TR-6, TR-7, and Stag automobiles. Owner complaints indicate that wipers fail while in use.

Case C7-37 concerns lighting system failures in 1970 through 1977 Triumph Spitfire, TR-6, and TR-7 cars. The suspected defect is in the master light switch controlling the headlights, taillights, instrument panel lights, and parking lights.

The susceptibility of subcompact cars to fire and explosion due to fuel tank damage in rear-end collisions at low to moderate closing speeds is the subject of Case C7-38. The investigation involves 1970-1976 Ford Pintos and Chevrolet Vegas.

Failure of headlight switches in 1971-1972 Mercury Capris, which can result in the loss of headlights, taillights, instrument panel lights, marker lights, and license plate lights, is also being investigated (Case C7-39). This investigation involves over 145,000 vehicles.

Case C7-40 involves an estimated 52,000, 1970-1974 MG Midgets manufactured by British Leyland Motors. It involves throttle cable malfunctions which result in breaking of the throttle cable or sticking of the throttle in the open or partially open position. If the cable breaks, the engine returns to idle position and the driver has no power to maneuver the vehicle in traffic. If the throttle sticks in an open or partially open position, engine speed will remain at the speed achieved by the driver when the problem occurs.

Alleged failure of a lock nut used on trailer suspension systems is the subject of Case C7-41. Involved is the AR III Series Trailer Air Suspension System manufactured by Neway Division, Lear Siegler, Inc. The problem concerns the pivot bolt connection lock nut which connects the suspension frame bracket to the trailer frame. If the lock nut works loose, the bolt may completely fall out, resulting in a misaligned suspension and erratic handling of the trailer, or the bolt may come in contact with a tire, resulting in premature tire wear and the possibility of a fire. NHTSA figures indicate 5,318 of these systems have been sold to various trailer manufacturers for use on their trailers. After being notified of the NHTSA investigation, the manufacturer decided to initiate a safety-related defect recall campaign.

NHTSA Administrator Joan Claybrook said that "because of our continuing concern for the safety of the motoring public, we have already issued Consumer Advisories to alert vehicle owners of the possibility of these problems and precautions to be observed, and to request reports from consumers who have experienced any of these problems."

During the reporting period, four investigations were terminated after the manufacturer recalled the product or vehicle involved.

Case C5-04 involved the Mercurio 10.00 x 20/22 Steel Belted Radial Tire manufactured by Ceat S.P.A. of Italy. The case was terminated because the company recalled the tires.

Case C5-32 involved the Fruhling Saf-T-Release Helmet Strap Fastener manufactured by Fruhling Products, Inc. This fastener, used on motorcycle helmets, was prone to opening while in use and was recalled.

Case C7-11 involved fuel system problems on 1974 Porsche Model 914 vehicles which could result in engine compartment fires. The vehicles were manufactured by Volkswagen A.G. of Germany. The case was terminated when the manufacturer recalled all 1970-1974 Porsche Model 914 vehicles imported into the U.S. for correction of the problem.

C7-13 involved 1975-1977 Econoline Vans and Club Wagons manufactured by the Ford Motor Co. These vans are equipped with plastic instrument panels that could shatter on impact, leaving sharp edges that could lacerate and puncture vehicle occupants. The investigation was terminated because Ford recalled the vehicles for installation of an instrument panel pad.

NHTSA's regular report series is issued to provide motorists, as well as the motor vehicle industry, with a complete account of federal defect investigation activity, while at the same time providing defect-related information in the interest of highway safety.

Interested persons with information bearing on current investigations are invited to write to: The Office of Defects Investigation, U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 400 Seventh St., SW, Washington, D.C. 20590.

Reports should indicate the make, model, year, and serial number (VIN) of the vehicle and all pertinent facts relating to the failure. Persons wishing to review summaries of the NHTSA's findings in terminated cases, or in the public file for suspended cases, may do so in technical reference room 5108 of the NHTSA at the above address.

TOLL-FREE "HOTLINE" REMINDER

Persons wishing to report automotive safety-related defects, request vehicle recall information, or obtain information on the activities of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration may use the NHTSA Auto Safety Hotline, direct to the Washington headquarters office.

The number is (800) 424-9393
Washington D.C. residents should call 426-0123

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NOTE: For economy reasons, all copies of this report do not contain the complete, tabular listing of all on-going defect investigatory cases. Recipients of the abbreviated version who desire the complete listing may call the Auto Safety Hotline.

U.S. Department of Transportation

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Office of Public Affairs

Washington, D.C. 20590

CONSUMER ADVISORY

FOR RELEASE TUESDAY
November 29, 1977

NHTSA 106-77 (IHC)
Tel. No. (202) 426-0670

1978 FORD LIGHT TRUCKS AND VANS RECALLED

The U.S. Department of Transportation said today Ford Motor Co. is recalling approximately 30,000 of its 1978 light trucks and vans to correct a potential fuel leak.

According to the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), Ford is recalling certain 1978 F-100, F-150, F-250 and F-350 light trucks; E-100, E-150, E-250 and E-350 Econoline vans; and E-100, E-150 and E-250 Club Wagons, all equipped with 300 CID engines and Carter-IV carburetors. The engines in these vehicles may be subject to fuel leakage at the carburetor/fuel filter connection. The fuel leak, attributed to improper threading of the carburetor/fuel filter connection, could pose a fire threat.

The problem was identified during Ford's October 1977 quality control testing. Ford is not certain how many of the 30,000 vehicles actually contain leaking carburetors.

NHTSA Administrator Joan Claybrook stated, "we know of no accidents or injuries that have been caused by this defect, but we are especially concerned about these vehicles being corrected promptly because light trucks and vans are becoming very popular as family vehicles."

Ford told the safety agency that recall letters explaining the problem and outlining procedures for inspection and replacement of carburetors, where necessary, will be mailed to owners in the near future.

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FOR RELEASE FRIDAY
December 2, 1977

NHTSA -- 107-77 (HP)
Tel. 202-426-9550

PASSIVE RESTRAINT PETITIONS DENIED

The U.S. Department of Transportation today reaffirmed its decision to require automatic occupant crash protection, such as air bags or passive safety belts, for passenger cars starting with the 1982 models.

Secretary Brock Adams denied petitions asking the Department to reconsider his decision announced on June 30, 1977, to require automatic crash protection, such as air bags or passive safety belts, for all front seat positions beginning with 1982 model full size and luxury size cars. The requirements will be extended to intermediate and compact cars beginning in model year 1983 and to subcompact and mini-compact cars in model year 1984.

Automatic crash protection systems require no action by the driver or passengers, such as buckling a safety belt.

Six petitions for reconsideration of the decision and one application to stay the requirement's effective date were filed by parties that disagree with various aspects of the DOT decision.

The petitions were filed by General Motors, Chrysler, Ford, American Motors, Economics and Science Planning, Inc. (ESP), and the Center for Auto Safety and Ralph Nader.

In announcing his decision, Secretary Adams cited department estimates that as many as 9,000 lives could be saved each year by the use of automatic crash protection systems in the entire United States auto fleet.

The secretary's decision won Congressional support in October when the House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce voted to table a resolution to disapprove his action and the Senate voted to table a disapproval resolution by a vote of 65 to 31.

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The petition by the Center for Auto Safety and Ralph Nader asked the secretary to eliminate the phase-in schedule and to make the requirements effective for all new cars on Sept. 1, 1980.

The secretary rejected the Center's petition, explaining that a four-year lead time was judged to be reasonable and necessary to assure that a satisfactory product could be developed and produced by most manufacturers in the United States market.

The decision, Adams said, further recognizes the limits of the tooling industry to accomplish major changes, and the demands this industry will face within the next several years because of an unprecedented combination of safety, fuel economy and emissions requirements.

The petition to stay the requirement's effective date was filed by the Pacific Legal Foundation, which earlier filed a petition for review of the requirement in the Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia.

In its application, the Foundation listed, in general terms, a number of items it alleged that the department had failed to consider or evaluate properly.

Other issues raised by the various petitioners included effectiveness of air bags systems, the cost of passive restraint systems, and test procedures required by the standard.

The department says it had addressed all the issues raised by the Pacific Legal Foundation and the other petitioners, before reaching its decision.

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CONSUMER ADVISORY

FOR RELEASE MONDAY
December 5, 1977

NHTSA 108-77 (BMA)
Tel. 202-426-0670

MAZDA RECALL FOR CARBURETOR DEFECT

Approximately 2,000 Mazda rotary engine vehicles are being recalled for correction of a carburetor problem that could result in fuel leakage and engine compartment fires, the U.S. Department of Transportation announced today.

The department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the federal agency responsible for motor vehicle safety, said the recall involves 1976 model Mazda RX-3 sedans, coupes, and station wagons equipped with manual transmissions.

The manufacturer, Toyo Kogyo Co., Ltd. of Japan, said the problem is caused by loosening of a plug on the carburetor, which allows fuel to drop onto hot engine components. The manufacturer estimates that less than one percent of the vehicles contain the defect.

Joan Claybrook, administrator of the federal safety agency, said "we were alerted to this potential problem when we obtained a copy of a news dispatch, datelined Tokyo. This dispatch, which apparently was used by some of the U.S. news media, said that the manufacturer planned to recall some 147,000 rotary engine cars, manufactured between April 1973 and March 1977, due to fuel leakage and possible fire problems. The manufacturer was questioned and reported that only slightly more than 2,000 of the affected vehicles were exported to the United States."

Correction of the problem involves use of a sealant on the plug to prevent it from coming loose.

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Affected vehicle owners will receive recall notices in December. In the meantime, the NHTSA administrator suggests that vehicle owners be alert to any strong odor of gasoline in the passenger compartment or fuel stains on the road surface under parked vehicles. If such symptoms are present, vehicle owners should have repairs done immediately.

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FOR RELEASE MONDAY
December 5, 1977

NHTSA 109-77 (BMA)
Tel. 202-426-0670

MACK TRUCK RECALL FOR REAR AXLE HOUSING DEFECT

An estimated 7,400 Mack trucks are being recalled for inspection and repair of the rear axle housing, the U.S. Department of Transportation announced today.

The recall involves certain Mack models equipped with SWTL56, SW56, and SW57 bogies (rear tandem wheels) and manufactured between May 5, 1977 and Oct. 18, 1977.

The department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), which writes and enforces federal motor vehicle safety standards, said the problem involves a deficiency in the welds holding the rear axle spring insulator bracket to the axle housing.

Joan Claybrook, NHTSA administrator, said, "If the welds fail, the spring insulator bracket separates from the axle housing. When this happens, misalignment of the rear wheels could result, with a possible loss of vehicle control. Axle separation could occur without warning."

The manufacturer said the problem is due to improper positioning of the welds, and that it has received two reports of bracket/axle separations, but no reports of accidents or injuries.

This is a voluntary recall by the manufacturer and involves the following models: DM, F, R, HMM, MB, RD, RM, U, RL, RS, WL, and WS. Owners of the affected vehicles will receive recall notices from the manufacturer.

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The NHTSA administrator suggests that until recall corrections are made, owners of these vehicles should check the bracket welds. If there are signs of cracks, the user should seek repairs immediately.

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FOR RELEASE MONDAY
December 5, 1977

NHTSA 110-77 (DLB)
Tel: 202-426-9550

DOT ANNOUNCES PUBLIC MEETING ON ANTI-LOCK AIR BRAKES

A public meeting will be held Dec. 15, 1977, in Washington, D.C. to discuss a federal standard dealing with anti-lock air brake systems for trucks, buses, and trailers, the U.S. Department of Transportation announced today.

The department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), which issues and enforces federal vehicle safety standards, called the meeting to discuss safety and operational experience with trucks, buses, and trailers designed to conform with the air brake standard (FMVSS 121).

Some vehicle operators have asserted that the anti-lock systems installed to meet the standard's "no lockup" requirements are malfunctioning in significant numbers, resulting in high maintenance costs and accidents. The meeting is intended to resolve conflicting field reports on the nature and extent of reliability problems with the antilock systems.

The meeting will be held in the U. S. Department of Commerce Auditorium on 14th St., between Constitution Ave. and E Sts., NW, beginning at 8:15 a.m. A second day will be devoted to the meeting if necessary.

Those wishing to participate and those who seek financial assistance to participate should write to: Administrator, NHTSA, Washington, D. C. 20590.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Scott Shadle, Office of Crash Avoidance, NHTSA, Washington, D. C. 20590, telephone 202-426-2153.

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CONSUMER ADVISORY

FOR RELEASE THURSDAY
December 8, 1977

NHTSA 111-77 (IHC)
Tel. No. (202) 426-0670

LINCOLN VERSAILLES RECALL

The U.S. Department of Transportation said today Ford Motor Co. is recalling approximately 3,000 of its 1978 Lincoln Versailles automobiles to correct potential safety defects in the vehicles' speed or cruise control units.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the federal agency responsible for motor vehicle safety, the recall includes all 1978 Versailles models produced through Nov. 12, 1977.

The problem prompting the announcement is described as a possibly misrouted wiring harness which can interfere with operation of the speed control servo arm. If the interference occurs when the speed control is in use, the throttle could become stuck in a partially opened position. The driver's ability to control the vehicle can be severely impaired.

NHTSA Administrator Joan Claybrook stated, "We know of no accidents or injuries caused by this problem and Ford estimates only four percent of the cars may require service. Owners should be receiving notification letters in the very near future."

The recall notification letters will describe the problem and explain that all Versailles should be inspected but only a few are likely to need service.

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FOR RELEASE FRIDAY
December 9, 1977

NHTSA -- 112-77 (IHC)
Tel. 202-426-0670

FORD AND PEUGEOT INVESTIGATIONS

Two new safety investigations focusing on 1968-1974 Ford and 1972-1975 Peugeot automobiles were announced today by the U. S. Department of Transportation.

The department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the federal agency responsible for motor vehicle safety, said the Ford investigation will be centered on a suspected problem with idler arms in approximately nine million full-sized and intermediate-sized vehicles.

The idler arm is a steering system component, and complaints received by the agency indicate a bushing in the idler arm can stick due to corrosion or lack of lubrication. If this happens, steering can become impaired and the idler arm may separate from the frame. Should this occur, drivers may have difficulty controlling their cars.

NHTSA Administrator Joan Claybrook cautioned that the failure "is often indicated by a grinding or snapping noise and difficulty in steering. We have 55 complaints about idler arm malfunctions, 43 of which reported the arm separated from the frame of the car." The agency is aware of five accidents attributed to idler arm failures but has no confirmed reports of related injuries.

NHTSA learned of the idler arm problem when 37 of the 55 reports received came through its Parts Return Program. More than 2,000 independent auto repair shops participate in the program by sending failed auto parts to a NHTSA contractor for analysis.

The second investigation involves approximately 26,000 1972-1975 Peugeot vehicles suspected of faulty seat belt retractors. This investigation was prompted by a petition NHTSA received from the Center for Auto Safety, a non-government public interest group which concentrates on consumer problems with automobiles.

- more -

Under investigation is the failure of the seat belt to roll completely into the retractor when the belts are not in use. The belt can become entangled in the seat adjustment mechanism or mangled in the door, damaging the belt. NHTSA is concerned about the ability of the belts to protect occupants after sustained abuse.

Owners experiencing either problem are urged to contact NHTSA, either by calling the agency's toll-free Auto Safety Hotline (800-424-9393) or by writing to: NHTSA, Office of Defects Investigations, 400 Seventh St., SW, Washington, D. C. 20590.

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CONSUMER ADVISORY

FOR RELEASE WEDNESDAY
December 7, 1977

NHTSA 113-77(BMA)
Tel. No. (202) 426-0670

CHRYSLER URGED TO RECALL 1975-1977 VEHICLES FOR STALLING PROBLEM

The U.S. Department of Transportation is asking the Chrysler Corp. to voluntarily recall more than one million 1975 through 1977 Valiants, Darts, Aspens, and Volares for correction of a stalling problem. The vehicles are equipped with 318 cubic inch V-8 or 225 cubic inch six-cylinder engines.

In a telegram sent Dec. 6 to Chrysler's Vice President of Vehicle Safety and Reliability, Joan Claybrook, administrator of the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), urged voluntary recall "in the interest of safety and to obviate the delay in, and the necessity of, further investigative effort and the scheduling of administrative enforcement proceedings."

In her telegram, Claybrook, who heads the federal agency responsible for motor vehicle safety, said that she had learned, through press releases, that the Chrysler Corp. has admitted the existence of a stalling problem but claims it is not safety-related. She pointed out that Chrysler recently conducted a safety-related defect recall campaign involving 1972 and 1973 full-size Chrysler vehicles because of a defective electrical connector which could cause loss of engine power.

Claybrook told the Chrysler executive that "the stalling of later model Chrysler vehicles appears equally hazardous."

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In May, 1977, the NHTSA opened an investigation into stalling problems affecting these vehicles. To date, the federal safety agency has received 998 owner complaint letters alleging 1,200 incidents of stalling, including reports of 52 accidents involving nine injuries and nine lawsuits. The NHTSA said Chrysler estimates it has some 4,500 consumer letters reporting stalling in the subject vehicles.

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CONSUMER ADVISORY

FOR RELEASE WEDNESDAY
December 14, 1977

NHTSA 114-77(BMA)
Tel. (202) 426-0670

TWO RECALLS BY CHRYSLER FOR
STEERING DEFECT AND FUEL LEAKAGE

An estimated 22,000 Plymouth, Dodge, and Chrysler 1978 model cars are being recalled for correction of a problem that could result in loss of steering capability; and an estimated 24,000 Dodge-1977 and 1978 light duty trucks are being recalled for correction of a problem that could result in fuel leakage.

Announcement of the recalls was made today by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

The department"s National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), which writes and enforces federal motor vehicle safety standards, said the steering problem involves 1978 Plymouth Volares and Furys; Dodge Aspens, Monacos, Chargers, and Diplomats; and Chrysler Cordobas and LeBarons with tilt steering columns, which were manufactured between mid-September through early October, 1977. The manufacturer estimates that two percent of these vehicles may be equipped with steering shafts containing a coupling pin which could fall out, resulting in a loss of steering capability. Recall correction involves installation of a cotter pin to insure that the coupling pin is retained.

The Dodge light duty truck recall involves 1977 and 1978 club cab models manufactured during the period August, 1976 through August, 1977. On these vehicles, the fuel tubes running from the fuel tank to the fuel pump may have been improperly routed so as to permit a portion of the vehicle underbody to interfere with and abrade the tube. Abrasion of the tube may result in fuel leakage. The actual percentage of vehicles having this problem is unknown.

-more-

Recall will involve inspection of the vehicles, correction of any misrouted fuel tubes and replacement of any damaged sections of the tube.

NHTSA officials urged owners to return their vehicles to dealers as soon as they get recall notices from the manufacturer.

In the meantime, owners of the light trucks involved should be alert to any signs of fuel leakage from the underside of their vehicles and fuel stains on the surface where the vehicles are parked; if such signs are evident, seek dealer help immediately. Owners of vehicles involved in the automobile steering recall should be alert to any signs indicating abnormal steering, and contact their dealers immediately.

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FOR RELEASE THURSDAY
December 15, 1977

NHTSA 115-77(IHC)
Tel. (202) 426-0670

TIRE SURVEY

The U.S. Department of Transportation is surveying car owners to find out the problems they are having with original equipment steel belted radial tires.

In late October, the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the federal agency responsible for motor vehicle safety, sent questionnaires to more than 100,000 purchasers of 1975 through 1977 domestic automobiles. The purpose of the survey is to find out what problems, if any, these owners have had with original equipment steel belted radial tires. The agency has received a number of complaints recently and needs to identify the scope of the problem, and identify those brands which are experiencing an unusual failure rate. The results of the survey are expected in January.

NHTSA obtained the names of new car purchasers from General Motors, Ford and Chrysler Corp. and structured the survey sample so owners of Firestone, Goodyear, Goodrich, General, Uniroyal and Michelin tires would be queried. These companies are the primary suppliers of original equipment tires on new domestic cars. The returned questionnaires are being tabulated by a NHTSA contractor.

NHTSA Administrator Joan Claybrook commented, "the survey will provide us uniquely valuable information for quickly identifying safety related tire defects and for analyzing the adequacy of our tire safety standards."

-more-

Claybrook added that although the survey sample included only slightly more than 100,000 new car buyers, NHTSA would like to hear from any owners who have experienced steel belted radial tire problems. In reporting such problems, consumers are asked to provide as much identification of the tire as possible (manufacturer, size, tire type and the DOT tire identification number from the inside sidewall of the tire).

Tire problems as well as any other safety-related motor vehicle problems can be reported to: NHTSA; Office of Consumer Services, 400 Seventh St., SW, Washington, D.C. 20590. Also, consumers can call the toll-free Auto Safety Hotline (800) 424-9393 to report these problems.

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FOR RELEASE MONDAY
December 12, 1977

NHTSA --116-77 (HP)
Tel. 202-426-9550

NEW DOT SURVEY SHOWS ONLY 18.5% OF DRIVERS USE BELTS

A new survey conducted for the U.S. Department of Transportation shows that only 18.5 percent of the nation's drivers are using their safety belts.

In the study prepared for the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), a total of 84,682 drivers were observed in 16 urban locations across the United States.

The survey, conducted from August 1976 through March 1977, showed that for vehicles equipped with lap/shoulder combination systems, the belts were used by 22 percent of the drivers observed. In vehicles equipped with separate lap and shoulder belts, the belts were used by 15.7 percent (1.9% both, 13.8 % lap only). In those vehicles equipped with lap belts only, the belts were worn by 10.4 percent.

"It is certainly discouraging to know that less than one in five American drivers are willing to take the simple life-saving step of buckling a safety belt," said Joan Claybrook, administrator of NHTSA, the federal agency responsible for motor vehicle safety. "These findings clearly support the decision to mandate passive restraint systems--a decision based on low belt usage rates and lack of available options to increase such usage.

"We believe that this study and further research will help us better understand what factors contribute to the wearing of safety belts," she said.

Highlights of the study, which indicate some unusual patterns of seat belt use, show:

- o More drivers of subcompact cars (29%) and compact cars (20.7%) use seat belts than drivers of intermediate (16.2%) or standard sized cars (17.3%).

- o Usage of belts in foreign model cars was higher than in American models, with drivers in Volvo cars experiencing a 44.6 percent usage rate.

- o More drivers in the west (27.3%) use seat belts than in the east (12%).

- o More women drivers (20.6%) use belts than men (17.3%).

- o More young drivers (18.8%) use belts than drivers over 50 (15.4%).

- o More drivers (22.1%) use belts during evening rush hour traffic than at other daylight hours.

Usage levels among drivers of 1974 models was significantly higher (25.2%) than belt usage in late model cars equipped with the eight-second, buzzer-light reminder systems. Starter interlocks and the continuous light-buzzer reminders in 1974 and some 1975 models apparently resulted in increased use of the lap/shoulder combination systems, the study indicated.

The pattern of usage was consistent among drivers observed in all 16 locations surveyed in the study, indicating that the light and buzzer systems on the newer model cars have had little impact on the level of safety belt usage.

Significantly, the lowest usage rate was observed in the traditional luxury models (15.6%).

In a tie-in with head restraints, the survey showed that about half the cars with adjustable head restraints have them adjusted improperly. Where head restraints were properly adjusted, 22.9 percent of the drivers were wearing their safety belts as opposed to 12.4 percent of belt users in cars with head restraints in the incorrect position. This finding indicates that people who buckle up also tend more than others to adjust their head restraints, and supports the concept of a "safety conscious" individual.

According to the survey, there is little difference in usage rates between drivers aged 16-24 (18.8%) and the 25-49 age category (19.3%).

Data for the study was obtained by tracking seat belt usage in 1964 and later model passenger cars on a continuous basis over the nine month period and observations were made when drivers stopped for red lights at traffic intersections.

Two observers at each location were trained to record the type of belt system installed, driver usage, sex of the driver and approximate age, head restraint position, license number, and vehicle model. Observations were made at a representative sampling of primary road intersections and freeway exits. Schedules were rotated to cover all daylight hours and days of the week.

The survey was conducated in Atlanta, Baltimore, Birmingham, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Fargo, N.D.-Morehead, Minn., Houston, Los Angeles, Minneapolis--St. Paul, New York, Phoenix, Pittsburgh, San Diego, San Francisco, and Seattle.

In a separate survey, the NHTSA contracted Opinion Research Corp. to conduct before and after studies calling for observations of actual usage in Detroit, Traverse City and Marquette, Mich. The objective of the government research was to determine the extent to which an advertising and publicity campaign to promote the use of belts had increased usage among motorists in each of the three cities.

The survey, based on more than 30,000 observations, showed no increased usage in Detroit and Marquette, and a one percentage point decline in usage in Traverse City.

The "before" period in this survey was August 18-28, and the "after" period was November 1-14.

In a similar study, Motorists Information, Inc., a group financed by the auto industry, made more than 40,000 observations of drivers at 222 locations throughout southeastern Michigan. In a release last week, MII's study showed that overall safety belt use increased from 14.7 percent to 21.0 percent.

The survey covered usage before a mass communications-advertising campaign in the area last August and observations following the campaign in late October and early November. The Department of Transportation parallel analysis disputes these findings.

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USAGE BY MAJOR CAR MODELS

MODEL	PERCENT USAGE
Volvo	44.6
Colt (C)	33.9
Toyota	33.5
Volkswagen	31.4
Capri (F)	31.3
Datsun	31.1
Vega (GM)	28.4
Hornet (AMC)	24.6
Volare (C)	24.2
Gremlin (AMC)	23.6
Nova (GM)	23.4
Mazda	23.1
Aspen (C)	23.0
Skylark (GM)	22.6
Omega (GM)	22.3
Camaro (GM)	21.8
Monza (GM)	21.3
Dart (C)	20.5
Pacer (AMC)	19.5
Fury (C)	19.1
Impala (GM)	18.7
Delta 88 (GM)	18.7
Caprice (GM)	18.1
Chevelle (GM)	18.0
Ninety-Eight (GM)	17.8
Valiant (C)	17.7
Marquis (F)	17.7
Monarch (F)	17.6
Cutlass (GM)	17.5
LeMans (GM)	16.7
Bonneville/Catlina (GM)	16.5
LeSabre (GM)	16.2
Newport (C)	15.9
Astre (GM)	15.9
Firebird (GM)	15.4
Satellite (C)	15.4
Century (GM)	15.3
Electra (GM)	15.3
Monte Carlo (GM)	15.2
Grand Prix (GM)	15.2
Lincoln (F)	14.9
Cougar (F)	14.1
Cadillac (GM)	14.0
Cordoba (C)	11.3

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FOR RELEASE FRIDAY
December 16, 1977

NHTSA -- 118-77 (DLB)
Tel. 202-426-9550

STATES PROMISED ENFORCEMENT ASSISTANCE

The U. S. Department of Transportation is offering states technical assistance to help improve their programs promoting compliance with the 55 mile-per-hour national maximum speed limit.

In a letter to the governors of all 50 states, Joan Claybrook, administrator of the U. S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), emphasized that assistance is available to state highway departments in their planning and evaluation of enforcement and public education programs. The NHTSA is the federal agency responsible for traffic safety.

Citing the importance placed by President Carter on compliance with the 55 m.p.h. speed limit as part of the national energy conservation program, Claybrook also stressed the dramatic reduction in highway traffic fatalities that has resulted from reduced speeds on the nation's highways.

She told the governors that the states will be given flexibility in modifying existing traffic safety programs in terms of manpower, equipment and educational activities to achieve a greater degree of voluntary compliance by the public.

Secretary of Transportation Brock Adams has encouraged the use of $30 million in previously appropriated fiscal year 1978 funds, designed for high impact safety programs, for promoting compliance with the speed limit.

In a related development, Claybrook announced a series of workshops to assist the states in further developing full scale programs to promote voluntary compliance with the 55 m.p.h. limit.

The workshops will be geared to managers of state safety and energy conservation programs with authority to provide resources for public communications programs, as well as to staff personnel from each of the NHTSA's 10 regional offices.

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In making the announcement, Claybrook said: "I regard the workshops as one of our best opportunities to assure a full appreciation of the 55 m.p.h. speed limit among state program managers. The meetings will also serve to develop their overall capability to conduct effective public communications programs on priority highway safety topics."

The workshops will be held from 8:30 a.m. Tuesday through 3:30 p.m. Thursday on these dates and locations:

January 10-12	Washington, D. C.
January 17-19	Atlanta, Ga.
January 24-26	Kansas City, Mo.
January 31-February 2	San Francisco, Calif.

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FOR RELEASE THURSDAY
December 15, 1977

NHTSA -- 117-77 (RC)
Tel. 202-426-9550

RECALL WARNING

The U. S. Department of Transportation has issued a stern warning to all motor vehicle manufacturers that any failure to conduct legally acceptable safety defect recall campaigns will result in stiff fines and other legal sanctions.

The warning was contained in letters to 121 motor vehicle manufacturers from Joan Claybrook, Administrator of the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). The agency is responsible for writing and enforcing federal motor vehicle safety standards, and has the legal authority to order safety defect recall campaigns.

In her letters, Ms. Claybrook noted that some manufacturers who have discovered safety defects in vehicles they produced have been repairing them only when the vehicles were brought in for other service work. The law requires a manufacturer who discovers a safety defect to notify all owners of the defect by mail, to recall the vehicles, and to repair the defect free of charge.

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"We have witnessed a legion of so-called 'product improvement', 'special service', and 'owner relations' campaigns, all of which were actually recall campaigns," said Claybrook. "But no matter what they are called, the manufacturer's responsibility to the public remains the same under the law; and we intend to offer maximum consumer protection by vigorously enforcing the laws governing recall programs."

NHTSA also noted that some manufacturers have failed to notify the agency that a recall campaign was in progress. Notification of such campaigns and copies of all communications with dealers and consumers dealing with a defect are required by law to be sent to NHTSA.

Each violation of the recall regulations is subject to a civil penalty of $1,000, with a maximum penalty of $800,000 for any related series of violations. A separate violation for purposes of assessing civil penalties is made with regard to each vehicle involved in the recall. Manufacturers who may be considering a recall campaign should contact the agency's Office of Defects Investigations for guidance.

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NHTSA 119-77(BMA)
Tel.No. (202)426-0670

DOT ANNOUNCES TWO
RECALLS INVOLVING FORDS

Two separate recall campaigns involving Ford passenger cars and light trucks were announced by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

An estimated 40,000 Ford Motor Co. 1977 model passenger cars and light trucks are being recalled for a steering problem, and approximately 6,000 1978 model Ford Fiesta vehicles are being recalled because of improperly located resistor wires on the air conditioner, which may cause fires under the instrument panel.

The department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the federal agency responsible for motor vehicle safety, said the steering problem involves 1977 model Maverick, Comet, Granada, and Monarch passenger cars and 1977 model F-100-150-250-350 light trucks equipped with manual steering and produced between May 1, 1977 and July 31, 1977.

The Ford Motor Co. informed NHTSA that the steering recall is the result of its own investigations of 11 reports of problems in 1977 model light trucks with manual steering. No accidents are known to have occurred.

Recall correction will involve inspection of vehicles and replacement of those steering gear assemblies that were manufactured in May 1977.

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The Fiesta recall involves vehicles which had air conditioning units installed by port contractors, and which were shipped from ports of entry to dealers from July 1, 1977 through Dec. 9, 1977. Approximately two percent of these models may have air conditioners on which blower motor resistor wires were improperly located. When this condition exists, under certain circumstances, the resistor may develop sufficient heat to cause a fire.

NHTSA officials urged owners to return their vehicles to dealers as soon as they get recall notices from the manufacturer.

In the meantime, owners of vehicles involved in the steering recall should be alert to any indications of increased steering effort accompanied by an audible popping or grinding noise, and seek dealer help immediately if such signs are evident. Owners of the Fiesta vehicles should remain alert to any indication of fire from their air conditioners, particularly the smell of hot or burning wires, and avoid using the air conditioner until recall corrections are made.

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FOR RELEASE FRIDAY
December 23, 1977

NHTSA -- 120-77 (RHC)
Tel. 202-426-9550

DOT ANNOUNCES REORGANIZATION OF ITS HIGHWAY SAFETY AGENCY

The U. S. Department of Transportation announced a reorganization of its National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) today. The action is designed to enhance the ability of the agency to carry out its responsibilities in motor vehicle safety and fuel economy regulation.

The reorganization both creates and consolidates offices and executive positions, and it places new emphasis on the agency's enforcement functions. The NHTSA emphasized that there will be no increase in either budget or personnel as a result of its organizational changes which will also improve its standards writing and research capability.

"The changes in the NHTSA are intended to increase our capacity to carry out our mission competently and responsively, giving greater service to the consumer at no extra cost to the taxpayer," said Joan Claybrook, administrator of the agency. "The move was made to bring the agency's structure into alignment with our current responsibilities and priorities, and to improve the functional relationships within the agency."

The specific changes in the reorganization include the following:

- The existing Motor Vehicle Safety Programs Office will be abolished to allow the writing and the enforcement of motor vehicle safety standards to be separated. Each will gain new prominence with the establishment of two new Associate Administrators, one for rulemaking and one for enforcement.

- The agency's fuel economy program will be incorporated into the two new associate administrators" offices so that the fuel economy and safety requirements can be fully coordinated.

- Research and development within the NHTSA will be redirected to include more attention to commercial vehicle operations and school buses under the Office of Heavy Duty Vehicle Research.

- more -

- o The work in six other research areas involving driver training programs; motorcycle, moped, and bicycle operator safety, and driver behavior research will be consolidated into two areas for greater efficiency and coordination of these programs.

- o All research and development and test facilities of the agency will be placed under a Center Director including the NHTSA's engineering test facility at East Liberty, Ohio; the Safety Research Laboratory at Riverdale, Md., and the Uniform Tire Quality Grading Facility at San Angelo, Tex.

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FOR RELEASE FRIDAY
December 30, 1977

NHTSA -- 122-77 (RHC)
Tel. 202-426-9550

DOT TO BLOCK SALE OF ILLEGAL HEADLIGHTS

The U. S. Department of Transportation today announced that it intends to halt the sale of imported motor vehicle headlamps which do not conform to federal motor vehicle safety standards for replacement lighting equipment on passenger cars, trucks and buses.

Action by the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), which monitors vehicle safety, was triggered by the passage of legislation by the States of Washington and Oregon to permit the sale of nonconforming units.

This approval, the federal safety agency has told these states, is illegal, and is preempted by the existing Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard No. 108, Lamps, Reflective Devices and Associated Equipment.

"None of these imported headlamps meets the requirements of our existing safety standard, and the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act forbids any state from adopting a headlamp standard that differs from a federal headlamp standard," said Joan Claybrook, administrator of the NHTSA.

"We want all states to be aware of this, and we intend to notify all parties concerned that these lamps are illegal for importation or sale in this country. Moreover, we intend to take direct legal action against manufacturers, importers, distributors and dealers of this equipment." She emphasized that the law provides a penalty of up to $1,000 per headlamp, with a maximum penalty of $800,000 possible.

- more -

The problem with these units, many of which are high intensity quartz halogen headlights, NHTSA said, is that they are of unsealed construction, permitting dirt and contamination to damage the reflectors; cannot be mechanically aimed; are very expensive (up to $40 a unit) and can have such a high initial candlepower (300,000) that they cause severe glare problems for approaching vehicles.

In contrast, headlights conforming to Standard 108 offer longer life because of their sealed beam construction, can be aimed and adjusted quite easily with mechanical equipment; their comparative cost is quite low ($2-3 per unit), and the glare is normally less than that of the imports.

However, the safety agency said work is underway to improve driver seeing distance by amending Standard 108 to allow up to 150,000 candlepower illumination when the lamps are on high beam.

In addition, NHTSA said it will disseminate publicity on its own research findings on European type headlighting systems, with distribution to state motor vehicle administrators, police and the general public.

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DOT REPORTS RECORD 12.6 MILLION VEHICLES RECALLED IN 1977

There were more motor vehicles recalled in the United States for correction of safety defects in 1977 than in any other year in history, the U.S. Department of Transportation announced today.

Figures compiled by the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), show that an estimated 12.6 million vehicles have been recalled this year. The previous single year record was set in 1972 with the recall of 12 million vehicles.

Over the three-year period from 1974 through 1976, vehicle recalls averaged less than three million a year.

In 1977, domestic manufacturers recalled almost 10,700,000 vehicles in 195 campaigns while 49 recalls of foreign models accounted for 1,940,000 vehicles called in for corrective action.

The record total reflects changes ordered by NHTSA Administrator Joan Claybrook in the agency's Office of Defects Investigation (ODI). The intensive enforcement and investigation activities of ODI directly prompted recall campaigns that involved more than 7.5 million vehicles, or 60 percent of the total vehicles recalled.

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"In these cases," Ms. Claybrook said, "it was thousands of complaints from consumers from all sections of the country, both by mail and toll-free phone calls to our Auto Safety Hotline, that supplied the impetus for our investigations. We fully intend to fulfill our obligation to protect the consumer and we will continue to monitor the activities of the manufacturers to assure that they are carrying out their responsibilities to the public under the law."

The 1977 total brings to almost 65 million the number of vehicles recalled since September 1966, when the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act was enacted. The total includes almost 55 million domestic vehicles and more than 10 million foreign models.

Major recall campaigns influenced by NHTSA included:

Chrysler -- Involving more than 1.3 million 1975-1977 Dodge Darts and Aspens and Plymouth Volares and Valiants for correction of a stalling problem. The federal safety agency had received more than 1,000 stalling reports from owners including 52 reports of accidents and nine injuries. A significant number of these reports were forwarded to the agency by the Center for Auto Safety. NHTSA said Chrysler received more than 4,500 owner complaints and nine law suits have been filed against the company. Earlier in December, Ms. Claybrook sent Chrysler a telegram urging the company to conduct a recall campaign, rather than cause delays by lengthy administrative enforcement proceedings.

General Motors -- Power brake boosters in 2.2 million 1976 GM vehicles, including certain Chevrolets, Pontiacs, Oldsmobiles, Buicks, Cadillacs, and GMC trucks. The agency had 15 reports of failure and two reports of minor accidents involving this defect, but urged GM to recall the vehicles because of the potential for additional serious accidents. GM told the agency it was aware of 550 failures.

Ford - This recall involved a total of more than 1.2 million vehicles (750,000 1976 and 1977 Fords, Mercurys and Lincolns, and 471,000 1972 Ford Torinos, Rancheros and Mercury Montegos) equipped with "flex-fans." The blades on these engine cooling fans could break off, resulting in vehicle damage and possible personal injury to anyone working under the hood or standing by the vehicle. NHTSA received 29 reports of flex-fan breakage, including one death and 19 injuries. Ford reported 185 complaints of fan blade breakage, including 13 reports of injury. Last summer, a Ford official was quoted by a Detroit newspaper as saying the company knew about the problem since 1972.

American Honda -- Nearly 1.4 million 1970-77 motorcycles were recalled for correction of unsafe gas cap locks. The case involved an investigation that had been pending since 1972. The agency had received reports of six accidents in which there were five injuries and

one death due to fuel fed fires. The problem was in the gas cap locking mechanism which could give way under impact permitting gas to spill, substantially increasing the possibility of a fire.

Chrysler -- The recall involved an estimated 783,000 1972 and some 1973 model Plymouth Fury, Dodge Polara and Monaco models, and Chrysler passenger cars to correct a problem involving the bulkhead electrical connector that could cause a complete loss of electrical power. In this investigation, initiated in 1972, the agency received 2,700 reports of possible failures, four accidents, five injuries and one death.

Ford -- The recall involved an estimated 500,000 1968 and 1969 Mustangs and Cougars with defective driver (bucket style) seats. This case was first investigated in 1969 and after a two-year legal battle, a U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C. found that the defect could result in the seat back suddenly falling backwards during vehicle operation. The Court, which said the failures presented "a severe threat to motor vehicle safety," heard evidence that several accidents occurred as a result of such seat failures, including injuries that resulted in hospitalization. Ford's own expert witness stated that a total of approximately 170,000 driver seat failures may have occurred. NHTSA received reports from owners saying "I found myself suddenly in the back seat," and "I was lying flat on my back looking at the ceiling of the vehicle," and "when the seat back broke I lost control of the vehicle and crossed into the opposite lanes of traffic."

General Motors -- The recall involved 133,000 1975 through 1978 Cadillacs equipped with electronic fuel injection systems for correction of a leakage problem in the fuel system which could result in engine compartment fires. Involved were an estimated 111,000 Sevilles and 22,000 Deville and Eldorado models. NHTSA's investigation was prompted by a report from the Dade County (Florida) Fire Department of 16 fires in late model Cadillacs and three owner complaints. GM said it had received seven reports alleging minor injuries.

In another major recall announced this week, Chrysler, in a voluntary action, announced it was recalling 1.2 million 1976-1978 Plymouth Volares, Dodge Aspens and Diplomats, and Chrysler LeBarons for correction of defective secondary hood latches which could permit the hoods to open while the vehicles are in use.

ODI said it was vitally interested in consumer complaints, both written and those phoned to the Hotline, because they contribute valuable data for potential defect investigations. "We examine every complaint," said one official. "We were even contacted by a consumer who complained about a mouse in his engine which caused it to malfunction."

NHTSA urged motorists to report vehicle problems either by writing to the Office of Defects Investigation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 400 Seventh St., SW, Washington, D.C. 20590, or by calling, toll-free, the NHTSA Auto Safety Hotline on (800)424-9393 (for Washington, D.C. residents the number is 426-0123).

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