U.S. Department of Transportation

news:

Office of Assistant Secretary for Governmental and Public Affairs

Washington, D.C. 20590

CONSUMER ADVISORY

FOR RELEASE TUESDAY
July 17, 1979

NHTSA 62-79 (AMES)
Tel. 202-426-0670

HEARING SET ON ADEQUACY OF VW RECALL CAMPAIGN

The U.S. Department of Transportation said today that in response to consumer requests it will hold a public hearing to determine whether Volkswagen of America, Inc. has reasonably met its obligations in carrying out a recent recall campaign.

The recall involved safety-related defects in the accelerator systems in 1975-76 Rabbit, 1975-76 Scirocco, 1974-75 Dasher, and 1974 Audi Fox vehicles.

The hearing, scheduled for July 24, was ordered by Joan Claybrook, head of the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, after the agency reviewed a petition from a consumer on the adequacy of the recall. NHTSA has received numerous reports from other consumers about continuing accelerator system failures despite the remedy provided by VW in the recall campaign.

The hearing will be held at 10 a.m. in Room 2230 of the DOT Headquarters Building, 400 7th St., SW, Washington, D.C.

The NHTSA began investigating apparently defective accelerator systems in these vehicles in April 1977, after receiving complaints of sticking and broken throttle cables with loss of driver control over vehicle speed. In December 1977, VW notified the agency of its intent to recall the vehicles to correct the problem. The remedy required dealers to check and lubricate the accelerator cables and carburetor linkage and to replace the cables, if necessary.

(more)

In addition to complaints from consumers about continuing accelerator system failures on cars that had recall corrections made, the agency said it also has received reports of accelerator system failures on later model Volkswagen cars. These cars may have been designed and manufactured with accelerator systems similar to the replacement systems installed on the vehicles subject to the recall.

Interested persons, (including the manufacturer) may make oral or written presentations on whether VW has met its legal obligations. Persons who wish to make oral presentations are requested to notify, in writing, Joanne Murianka, Office of Defects Investigation, NHTSA, Washington, D.C. 20590, or call 202-426-2850 before the close of business on July 20, 1979.

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

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U.S. Department of Transportation

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Office of Assistant Secretary for Governmental and Public Affairs

Washington, D.C. 20590

FOR RELEASE WEDNESDAY
July 18, 1979

NHTSA 61-79 (Ames)
Tel.No. (202) 426-0670

DOT AUTO DEFECT CASE
REPORT FOR JAN-MARCH 1979

Two new safety-related defect investigations were opened during the first quarter of 1979 and 10 were terminated, the U.S. Department of Transportation reports. At the end of the reporting period, 46 safety-related defect investigations were in progress, including three in litigation, and two in which an initial determination of defect has been made.

For terminated cases, information collected during investigations is available for public viewing in the Technical Reference Division, Room 5108, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 400 Seventh St., SW, Washington, D.C. 20590.

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Reporting Period January, February, March, 1979

Safety Related Defect Investigatory
Cases opened this period

JANUARY 1979

Case Number: C9-05
Manufacturer: Ford Motor Company
Make: Pantera
Model: ALL
Year(s): 1971-1974

Possible Problem: Alleged excessive rust and corrosion of structural members and fuel tanks of 1971 through 1974 Pantera vehicles marketed by Ford Motor Company, ODI Case Number C9-05

BASIS FOR INVESTIGATION

This case was opened on January 11, 1979, based on reports of severe rust and corrosion on Pantera vehicles in structural areas, particularly near the transmission and rear axles and the fuel tank, reported by the NHTSA Regional Office in San Francisco, California.

DESCRIPTION AND FUNCTION

The area of the vehicle most often reported as subject to failure is the rear inner wheel house on both sides. This component serves as the major structural member of the chassis. The upper rear suspension control arms and the rear spring/shock absorber unit are attached to this wheel house.

The vehicle fuel tank is fabricated from two layers of 1 mm thick steel sheets, and is located immediately behind the driver's seat, alongside the left side of the engine.

ANALYSIS OF THE ALLEGED PROBLEM

Problem Mode:

The fuel tanks allegedly rust from the inside out as well as from the outside in. Leaked fuel is discharged into an area approximately 4 - 6 inches from the left side exhaust manifold.

The weakening of the rear wheel house from rust and corrosion has allegedly resulted in rear suspension failure and loss of rear wheels, both of which can result in loss of vehicle control.

Problem Symptom:

Fuel tank leaks are usually accompanied by the smell of fuel in the driver's compartment. Weakening of the rear wheel house area is usually from the inside out and gives the owner no warning prior to catastropic failure.

MARCH 1979

Case Number: C9-10
Manufacturer: Volkswagen of America
Make: Volkswagen
Model: Rabbit, Scirocco, Dasher, Audi-Fox
Year(s): 1974-1978

Possible Problem: Alleged failure of the Brake Master Cylinder on certain 1974-1976 Volkswagen Dasher/Audi Fox vehicles and 1975-1976 Rabbit/Scirocco vehicles imported by Volkswagen of America, Inc. ODI Case No. C9-10

BASIS FOR INVESTIGATION

A case was opened on March 16, 1979, based on 30 consumer complaints, two collision accidents with one injury allegedly resulting from failure of the subject master cylinders.

DESCRIPTION AND FUNCTION

The brakes are controlled by a foot pedal and are hydraulically actuated through a dual piston master cylinder. The master cylinder is the control unit in which hydraulic pressure is developed. When the driver depresses the brake pedal and exerts a force on the master cylinder pistons, hydraulic pressure is transmitted to each wheel cylinder to complete the braking action. The brakes serve to decelerate and stop a vehicle and have a basic role in vehicle handling.

ANALYSIS OF THE ALLEGED PROBLEM

Problem Mode:

Allegedly, premature wear of the rubber seals or undersized primary cup seals in the master cylinder may allow internal leakage causing difficulty in maintaining the desired pressure distribution in the brake system and requiring progressively longer brake pedal travel. Although one portion of the dual system may or may not be affected, the braking capacity of the vehicle will allegedly be impaired.

Problem Symptoms:

Vehicle operators may experience a partial loss of braking capability as foot pedal travel progressively increases.

Safety Related Defect Investigatory
Cases Terminated This Period

JAN 1979

Case Number: C8-18
Manufacturer: Firestone Tire and Rubber Company
Make: Firestone
Model: Steel Belted Radial "500"
Year(s): Various

Possible Problem: Failure of steel belted radial "500"

Reason for Termination: RECALL NO. 78T-031

FEB 1979

Case Number: C4-29
Manufacturer: Ford Motor Company
Make: Ford
Model: All models with 4 bbl carburetor
Year(s): 1967-1974

Possible Problem: Fast idle cam breakage causes jamming of throttle in open position.

Reason for Termination: Case was placed in suspended category by notice dated December 27, 1978. Since no new evidence has been received to justify continued investigation, the case is terminated in accordance with Department of Transportation, NHTSA, Defects Investigation Policy published in the Federal Register of October 12, 1973.

Case Number: C4-59
Manufacturer: Volkswagen of America
Make: Volkswagen
Model: Porsche 911T-914-Audi 100s
Year(s): 1970-1972

Possible Problem: Bosch fuel injectors, fuel leakage from pressurized system onto engine exterior.

Reason for Termination: Case was placed in suspended category by notice dated December 27, 1978. Since no new evidence has been received to justify continued investigation, the case is terminated in accordance with Department of Transportation, NHTSA, Defects Investigation Policy published in the Federal Register of October 12, 1973.

Case Number: C5-01
Manufacturer: General Motors Corporation
Make: Chevrolet
Model: Corvette
Year(s): 1963-1974

Possible Problem: Rear wheel failure due to lack of lubricant.

Reason for Termination: Case was placed in suspended category by notice dated December 27, 1978. Since no new evidence has been received to justify continued investigation, the case is terminated in accordance with Department of Transportation, NHTSA, Defects Investigation Policy published in the Federal Register of October 12, 1973.

Case Number: C5-07
Manufacturer: General Motors Corporation
Make: Pontiac
Model: All V-8
Year(s): 1966-1972

Possible Problem: Failure of timing gear and chain.

Reason for Termination: Case was placed in suspended category by notice dated December 27, 1978. Since no new evidence has been received to justify continued investigation, the case is terminated in accordance with Department of Transportation, NHTSA, Defects Investigation Policy published in the Federal Register of October 12, 1973.

Case Number: C7-34
Manufacturer: Hollywood Accessories
Make: Hydraulic Jack
Model: 646
Year(s): ALL

Possible Problem: Leveling mechanism may fail if load is not centered on Jack saddle.

Reason for Termination: RECALL NO. 78E-007

Case Number: C8-06
Manufacturer: American Motors Corporation
Make: American Motors
Model: Hornet-Gremlin
Year(s): 1975-1977

Possible Problem: Power steering hose failure due to location near exhaust manifold.

Reason for Termination: RECALL NO. 78V-070

MAR 1979

Case Number: C6-22
Manufacturer: American Motors Corporation
Make: American Motors
Model: Pacer
Year(s): 1975-1976

Possible Problem: Rack and Pinion seal leaks with possible loss of steering control.

Reason for Termination: Failures of tie rod ends was found to be the result of inadequate seal leak repair by dealerships. Revisions in repair procedures and component design have eliminated problem.

Case Number: C7-37
Manufacturer: British Leyland Motors
Make: Triumph
Model: ALL
Year(s): 1970-1977

Possible Problem: Failure of headlamp switch to activate.

Reason for Termination: RECALL NO. 78V-013

Case Number: C8-23
Manufacturer: General Motors Corporation
Make: Oldsmobile-Chevrolet-Buick
Model: V6-Starfire, V8-Monza, V6-Skylark
Year(s): 1975

Possible Problem: Wheel bearing failure

Reason for Termination: RECALL NO. 78V-242

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATION

CURRENT INVESTIGATIONS OF ALLEGED SAFETY RELATED DEFECTS

I. INVESTIGATIONS

Report for
Month Ending: March 1979

Those cases listed herein 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	1968-69	16 x 5.5 Two Piece Wheel	Lock Ring Gutter failure could result in rapid air loss or Side Ring leaving wheel.
C4-07	Ford (Suspended)	Mercury	1970-71	Hood Latch	Failure of latch mechanism could result in hood pop-up obscuring driver vision.
C4-17	General Motors	Chevrolet Series C,P,G-10 Trucks & GMC Series C,P, G-1500 Trucks	1971-72	Steering Tie Rod	Separation of Ball from Socket with loss of vehicle control.
C4-18	Ford	Fairlane and Ranchero Mercury Montego Ford Falcon	1965-69 1965-69 1965-70	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.

HS Form 338 (Feb. 1975)

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATION

CURRENT INVESTIGATIONS OF ALLEGED SAFETY RELATED DEFECTS

Report for
Month Ending: March 1979

CASE NO.	MANUFACTURER/MAKE	MODEL	YEAR	COMPONENT	POSSIBLE PROBLEMS
C4-28	Ford	All Pintos	1971-72	Rack and Pinion Steering	Alleged steering difficulty or loss of steering control due to bending of steering assembly due to wheel impacts.
C4-53	General Motors	Chevelle	1965-69	Engine Mounts	Alleged Engine Mount failure. See C4-18.
C5-08	Toyota Motor Sales	Corolla & Carina vehicle equiped with 1600cc engine	1971-73	Throttle	Alleged throttle sticking. Could result in loss of vehicle control.
C5-09	Kar-Rite (Suspended)	Jack Stand Model 1052, rated at 4,000 pounds	All	Jack Stand	Failure to meet load rating. Failure of jack stand during use could result in injury to persons under or adjacent to vehicle.
C5-26	Ford	Mercury Capri	1971-73	Seat Failures	Failure in reclining mechanism allowing seat to rotate rearwards could result in loss of control.
C6-31	Ford	F-250 and F-350 Series Trucks	1972-74	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.

HS Form 338 (Feb. 1975)

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATION

CURRENT INVESTIGATIONS OF ALLEGED SAFETY RELATED DEFECTS

Report for
Month Ending: March 1979

CASE NO.	MANUFACTURER/MAKE	MODEL	YEAR	COMPONENT	POSSIBLE PROBLEMS
C7-10	Ford	Mercury Capri	1971-74	Front Stabilizer	Alleged Front Stabilizer Bar failures. Could result in loss of vehicle control.
C7-14	Volkswagen	Rabbit and Scirocco Dasher Audi	1975-76 1974-75 1973-75	Throttle Control System	Alleged Throttle Control System malfunctions could result in loss of vehicle control.
C7-21 (2)	General Motors	Chevrolet, Buick, Pontiac, Cadillac, Oldsmobile and GMC Trucks	1971-77	Power Brake Booster	Power Brake Booster failure requires high brake pedal forces to stop vehicle.
C7-22 (1)	Chrysler	Dart, Aspen, Volare, Valiant	1975-77	Carburetion and Emissions system	Vehicle stalling-Carburetion and Emissions. Could result in loss of control or accident in traffic situation.
C7-24 (2)	Ford	Passenger Cars and Light Trucks	1970-77	Flex-Fan (Engine Cooling Fan)	Flex-fan breakage can result in injury to anyone working under hood of vehicle with engine operating.
C7-30	Fiat	All	1970-77	Undercarriage	Suspension and Undercarriage failure due to corrosion.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATION

CURRENT INVESTIGATIONS OF ALLEGED SAFETY RELATED DEFECTS

Report for
Month Ending: March 1979

CASE NO.	MANUFACTURER/MAKE	MODEL	YEAR	COMPONENT	POSSIBLE PROBLEMS
C7-31	British Leyland	Triumph Spitfire TR-7, MGB, Jaguar XJ6, Jaguar XJ12, MG Midget	1975-77	Ignition system	Ignition amplifier may fail causing vehicle to stall in traffic.
C7-32 (2)	British Leyland	Triumph TR-7	1975-77	Throttle Cable	Throttle Cable failure. Accelerator sticks or returns to idle. Results in loss of power or inability to control vehicle speed.
C7-33	General Motors	Light Duty Trucks Chevrolet & GMC C10,P10,K10,G20	1975-77	Jack	Jacks may fail when used on some shoulder inclines.
C7-39	Ford	Mercury Capri	1971-72	Headlight Switch	Switch may fall apart causing headlights and taillights to cease operation.
C7-40	British Leyland	Midget	1970-74	Throttle Cable	Throttle may break or stick in the open or partially open position. Results in loss of power or inability to control vehicle speed.
C8-01 (1)	General Motors	Cadillac	1975-77	Electronic Fuel Injection System	Engine compartment fires due to possible fuel leakage in Fuel Injection System.

HS Form 338 (Feb. 1975)

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATION

CURRENT INVESTIGATIONS OF ALLEGED SAFETY RELATED DEFECTS

Report for
Month Ending: March 1979

CASE NO.	MANUFACTURER/MAKE	MODEL	YEAR	COMPONENT	POSSIBLE PROBLEMS
C8-02	Ford	All Models with V-8 engines and C-6 or FMX transmissions.	1973-78	Transmission Linkage	Transmission may jump from Park to Reverse.
C8-03	Peugeot, Inc.	304 and 504	1972-75	Seat Belt System	Retractor fails to operate properly Belt becomes damaged or entangled.
C8-04	Ford	Ford, Mercury, Lincoln, Full-size & Intermediate	1968-74	Idler Arm and Mounting Bracket	Bracket pulls out of frame rail resulting in loss of steering control.
C8-07 (1)	American Motors	All	1975-76	Ignition System	Ignition System failure causes stalling.
C8-08	Kool Klutch Co.	Kool Flex Imperial	1973-77	Engine Cooling Fan	Cracking and/or separation of Engine Cooling Fan blades.
C8-19	Ford	Capri	1971-78	Manual, Floor Mounted Gear Shift Lever	Gear Shift Lever breaks or detaches from transmission
C8-20	Ford	Granada Monarch	1975-77	Power Steering Control Valve	Steering instability
C8-22 (1)	Overhead Door Co.	Jifflox 5000 Series Convertor Dolly	1977	Anti-lock Sensor	Sensor produces an erratic signal to driver's Anti-lock warning light in truck cab.

HS Form 338 (Feb. 1975)

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATION

CURRENT INVESTIGATIONS OF ALLEGED SAFETY RELATED DEFECTS

Report for
Month Ending: March 1979

CASE NO.	MANUFACTURER/MAKE	MODEL	YEAR	COMPONENT	POSSIBLE PROBLEMS
C8-24	Broadwheel Co.	13" & 14" Wheel	All	Boat Trailer Wheels	Rim detaches from spider due to weld failure causing wheel to separate from trailer.
C8-25	Chrysler	Dodge Van B-300, MB-300, CB-400, MB-400	1973-77	Front Disc Brakes	Temporary loss of Front Brakes due to caliper contact with frame.
C8-26	Ford	Heavy Trucks B,C, F,L,W and DCL	1975-78	Wiring Harness connecting Rear Wheel Sensor Junction Block to Anti-lock Computer Module	Failure of wiring due to flexing while in motion may result in reduced braking capability.
C8-27	Ford	Granada Monarch	1975-77	Fuel Line Hose	Hose failure may result in engine compartment fires.
C8-28	Fiat	X-1/9 & 128	1973-77	Front Wheel Bearing	Bearing failure may cause loss of vehicle control.
C8-29	Ford	Pinto, Bobcat	1973-75	Steering Coupling Flange	Failure may result in loss of steering control.
C8-33	General Motors	Buick, Pontiac Oldsmobile	1977	231 V-6 Engine	Alleged stalling may result in loss of control or accident in traffic situation.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATION

CURRENT INVESTIGATIONS OF ALLEGED SAFETY RELATED DEFECTS

Report for
Month Ending: March 1979

CASE NO.	MANUFACTURER/MAKE	MODEL	YEAR	COMPONENT	POSSIBLE PROBLEMS
C8-39	Volkswagen	Porsche 911	1977	Engine Compartment	Possible Engine Compartment fires
C9-01	Ford	Vans, F&E Series Light Trucks	1974-77	Steering Gear Bolt	Alleged Steering Gear Bolt failure. Possible loss of steering.
C9-05	Ford	Pantera	1971-74	Rear Undercarriage	Alleged excessive rust and corrosion of Rear Undercarriage. Possible collapse of rear suspension and loss of vehicle control
C9-10	Volkswagen	Rabbit, Fox Dasher, Scirocco	1974-76	Brake Master Cylinder	Failure of Master Cylinder results in loss of brakes.

HS Form 338 (Feb. 1975)

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATION

CURRENT INVESTIGATIONS OF ALLEGED SAFETY RELATED DEFECTS

II. INVESTIGATION IN LITIGATION OR INITIAL DETERMINATION

Report for Month Ending: March 1979

CASE NO.	MANUFACTURER/MAKE	MODEL	YEAR	COMPONENT	POSSIBLE PROBLEMS
140 (1)	Ford (FINAL DEFECT DETERMINATION MADE 8-12-75. IN LITIGATION)	Mustang & Cougar	1968-69	Seat Back Pivot Arm	Inboard Pivot failures. Seat Back could collapse resulting in loss of vehicle control.
C3-11 (1)	General Motors (IN LITIGATION 2-13-74)	Cadillac	1959-60	Steering Pitman Arm	Fatigue failure causing loss of vehicle control.
C3-29 (1)	Ford (FINAL DEFECT DETERMINATION MADE 12-30-75. IN LITIGATION)	Capri	1971-73	Windshield Wiper	Arm detaches from drive shaft motor Failure due to underpower. Could result in loss of driver visibility
C4-23 (1)	General Motors (INITIAL DEFECT DETERMINATION MADE 2-14-77)	Opel	1964-71	Fuel Tank and System	Fuel System integrity. Taillight mounting bolt can penetrate Fuel Tank in right rear end impacts at speeds below 10 mph.
C7-38 (3)	Ford/GM (INITIAL DEFECT DETERMINATION MADE 5-8-78: Regarding Pinto's & Bobcat's except station wagons)	Pinto/Vega Subcompact	1970-76	Gas Tank	Readily damaged in rear end collision. Possibility of fire or explosion.

HS Form 338 (Feb. 1975)

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATION

CODES

1. Vehicles have been recalled by the manufacturer.

2. Manufacturer has recalled some models.

3. Pinto and Bobcat vehicles have been recalled by the manufacturer.

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

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Office of Assistant Secretary for Governmental and Public Affairs

Washington, D.C. 20590

CONSUMER ADVISORY

FOR RELEASE FRIDAY
July 20, 1979

NHTSA 63-79 (Ames)
Tel.No. (202) 426-0670

DOT INVESTIGATES FAN BLADE BREAKAGE ON CHRYSLER CARS

The U.S. Department of Transportation said today it is investigating a suspected safety defect in the engine cooling fans used in some 1973 model year Chrysler passenger cars.

The department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration said the alleged problem involves the breaking of blades on a type of engine fan called a "flex-fan", which could result in vehicle damage and personal injury.

The investigation was opened after receipt of a petition from an attorney whose client suffered a head injury when struck by a portion of the fan blade from his 1973 Dodge Charger. The NHTSA also obtained information indicating at least 14 other instances of fan blade failure involving three alleged injuries on 1973 Dodge Chargers equipped with the same type fan.

These fans have five curved flexible blades which flex and flatten out as the fan's rotating speed increases with increased engine speed. They were used on an estimated 242,000 Chrysler 1973 model passenger cars. These included sport compact, intermediate and full-size passenger cars equipped with 318 cubic inch engines and air conditioning. Also, intermediate and full-size cars with 360, 400, or 440 cubic inch engines without air conditioning.

The flexing of the fan is designed to reduce engine horsepower requirements at higher engine operating speeds. There are no reliable pre-failure symptoms to warn the motorists, the safety agency said.

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NHTSA Administrator Joan Claybrook said, "If a blade breaks while the vehicle is in motion, damage such as dented hoods and severed hoses within the engine compartment could result. The danger, however, is greatest for service personnel and vehicle owners who work on their own cars. Blade breakage while the hood is open and the engine is running can result in serious injuries because broken fan pieces can fly out at great speeds."

The safety agency conducted an earlier investigation involving flex-fans used on 1970-77 Ford Motor Co. passenger cars and light trucks. That investigation resulted in the recall of several types of flexible blade fans installed in over one million vehicles.

Though the new investigation is centered on 1973 model year vehicles, the NHTSA will gather information on other model years as well. Therefore, all vehicle owners who have experienced this problem on any model year Chrysler vehicle 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 (Washington, D.C. metropolitan area 426-0123).

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

NHTSA -- 84-79
Tel. 202-426-9550

NHTSA ISSUES COMPLIANCE REPORT FOR JULY 1979

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 Assistant Secretary for Governmental and Public Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20590

FOR RELEASE THURSDAY
August 2, 1979

CONSUMER ADVISORY

NHTSA --64-79 (PARIS)
Tel. 202-426-9550

DOT SETS SEPTEMBER MEETING TO DISCUSS HEAVY TRUCK FATALITIES

Traffic accidents involving heavy trucks claimed an estimated 4,624 lives in 1978, a 40 percent increase since 1975, according to statistics compiled by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Last year, heavy truck related deaths accounted for almost 10 percent of the 50,000 traffic fatalities, or one out of every 10 persons killed on the nation's highways.

The department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has announced a public meeting in Washington, D.C., on Sept. 10 to discuss the problem. The meeting will be held from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. in the Department of Commerce Auditorium, 14th St., and Constitution Ave., NW.

The government has invited all persons associated with the trucking industry, manufacturers, drivers and the general public to attend the one-day meeting on the safety aspects of designing, manufacturing, operating and maintaining heavy duty trucks.

NHTSA Administrator Joan Claybrook said,"We are very concerned by the alarming increase in fatalities among occupants of heavy duty trucks since 1975, and have made truck safety one of the priorities in our five-year rulemaking plan.

"Since the safety of trucks is largely in the hands of the drivers, it is appropriate that they have an opportunity to be heard at the meeting and give the nation the benefit of their driving experiences and first-hand knowledge."

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She noted that the fall meeting will provide an exchange of communication among the trucking industry, the drivers and the government on issues of heavy truck safety. "It will also provide a means to increase DOT's knowledge and understanding of problems and possible solutions in truck safety, as well as to identify additional areas for possible federal actions," Claybrook said.

NHTSA figures on heavy truck safety, covering a four-year period from 1975 through 1978, are based on information collected by the agency's Fatal Accident Reporting System. The facts show:

- o There was a 41 percent increase in the number of fatalities involving occupants of heavy trucks from 1975 through 1978.

- o Almost 30 percent of the increase in automobile deaths between 1975 and 1978 is attributable to fatalities occurring in accidents with heavy trucks.

- o In fatal accidents involving heavy trucks and passenger cars, 97 out of 100 deaths are to the occupants of the cars.

- o Texas and California continue to have the most fatal accidents involving heavy trucks, but their number of accidents has increased less in the four-year period than have those in other states.

- o Between 1975 and 1977, (figures are not yet available for 1978) fatalities in heavy duty trucks rose more than twice as fast as the number of miles travelled by such vehicles.

Under its five-year rulemaking plan, NHTSA will give greater emphasis to heavy truck safety, including brakes, tires, rear underride protection, lighting, improved fields of view, splash and spray control, interior noise level, fuel system integrity and ride quality.

Discussions at the meeting will center on five major topics. These include driveability (brakes, tires and road conditions, handling and stability, and speed control); vision and lighting; crash protection; driver environment; and maintenance, operation and training.

On June 19, 1979, the National Highway Safety Advisory Committee, a 35-member group appointed by the President to advise the Secretary of Transportation on highway safety issues, held a public meeting on limiting the road speed capability of new heavy duty trucks and intercity buses, as well as examining the level of safety in operating commercial vehicles.

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The meeting was scheduled after the Trailways Bus Co. petitioned NHTSA to require that commercial vehicles be equipped with governors that would limit their speed capability to 57 miles per hour. The petition claimed that the rule limiting the speed of commercial vehicles would reduce accidents, save lives and conserve fuel.

The Advisory Committee recommended that NHTSA undertake a research program to demonstrate the costs, benefits and overall effectiveness of speed control devices before establishing rules.

It also suggested more resources were needed to improve the performance of the federal government's enforcement of commerical vehicle safety regulations. The Committee also recommended stricter enforcement of the 55 mph national speed limit law.

Persons who want to participate in the meeting but lack the funds to do so may apply for financial assistance by writing to Ms. Ann Mitchell, Office of Public Affairs & Consumer Participation, NHTSA, Room 5232, Washington, D.C. 20590.

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATION
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Official Business

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U.S. Department of Transportation
news:
Office of Assistant Secretary for Governmental and Public Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20590

FOR RELEASE FRIDAY
August 10, 1979

CONSUMER ADVISORY

NHTSA-66-79 (PARIS)
Tel. 202-426-9550

DOT FINDS SAFETY DEFECTS IN CAPRIS

The U.S. Department of Transportation today announced an initial determination that safety related defects may exist in several components of 1971-1974 and 1976-1978 Capris imported by the Ford Motor Co.

An estimated 420,000 vehicles are in use on the nation's highways.

This determination is the result of investigations conducted by the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The agency said the front seat-backs in the 1971-1974 models, the headlight switches in 1971-1972 models, and the floor-mounted gear shift levers in 1971-1974 and 1976-1978 models equipped with manual transmissions are subject to failure, which can result in injuries, deaths and property damage.

NHTSA has scheduled a public meeting on the matter to permit Ford to present its data, views and arguments concerning the determination. The public also is invited to participate in the hearing scheduled for Sept. 18, 1979, at 10 a.m. in Room 2230 of the DOT headquarters building, 400 Seventh St., SW, Washington, D.C.

NHTSA said it has received reports of more than 100 instances of failure of the backs of the fully-reclining type front bucket seats used in some 1971-1974 Capris, causing accidents in three cases, loss of vehicle control in seven others and nine injuries. Failures can result in collapse of the back of the driver's seat toward the rear of the vehicle, making it difficult for the driver to control the vehicle. Investigators said the failure is caused by the absence of a weld in the reclining mechanism of the seat.

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The government said its investigation of the headlight switches, opened on the basis of consumer complaints, disclosed a problem in the three-position rocker type plastic switch mounted on the left side of the dash in the 1971 and 1972 Capri models. Failure generally occurs because the switch literally falls apart when turned on or off. This results in electrical failure of head, parking, sidemarker, license, instrument panel and tail lamp circuits -- an obvious safety problem. Although the agency has no reports of injuries or accidents, it has learned of an estimated 160,000 replacement parts sold for the 145,000 1971-1972 Capris imported.

NHTSA also said it has received at least 150 reports involving separation of the gear shift lever, including one reported accident. It has no knowledge of injuries or fatalities. Separation can occur without warning and causes loss of ability to control the speed of the vehicles. If the lever comes off while in neutral, the vehicle cannot be moved.

NHTSA advised consumers who have experienced these problems to notify the agency by calling the toll free Auto Safety Hotline on 800-424-9393 (Washington metropolitan area 426-0123) or by writing to NHTSA, 400 Seventh St., SW, Washington, D.C. 20590.

Persons interested in participating in the meeting should contact Joann Murianka of NHTSA at 202-426-2850 before Sept. 10.

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U.S. Department of Transportation
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Office of Assistant Secretary for Governmental and Public Affairs
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ADVANCE FOR RELEASE SUNDAY
August 19, 1979

NHTSA -- 67-79 (McCahill)
Tel. 202-426-9550

DOT SAFETY CAR EXCEEDS STANDARD IN CRASH TEST

Crash test results announced today by the U.S. Department of Transportation showed that human occupants would have survived a 40 miles per hour head-on collision in one of its research safety vehicles.

The department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration said the crash test involved the collision of its Calspan RSV into a Japanese production car of the same weight, with each car traveling at 40 miles per hour. Put another way, occupants of the DOT car would have survived an 80 miles per hour closing speed crash.

Instrumented dummies were used to provide data on the fate of the occupants. The test was performed at the Japan Automotive Research Institute located near Tokyo.

Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard #208 requires automatic crash protection in frontal crashes up to 30 miles per hour beginning in model year 1982.

"It's particularly gratifying that one of our Research Safety Vehicles has exceeded the 1982 standard in 1979," NHTSA Administrator Joan Claybrook said. "This demonstration leaves no doubt in my mind that the automotive industry has the means to do a better job of safeguarding the motoring public. If all passenger cars on U.S. highways incorporated the safety features of this RSV, approximately 15,000 lives could be saved each year," said Claybrook.

The Department's Research Safety Vehicle program is developing experimental vehicles that will permit survival of occupants in a variety of severe crashes, and will simultaneously meet other national goals of pedestrian safety, fuel economy, emissions, damageability and cost.

- more -

The Calspan RSV is equipped with automatic crash protection for both the driver and the front seat passenger. The driver restraint system consists of an air cushion for the head and upper torso and knee restraint for lower body protection. The passenger restraint is an inflatable shoulder belt with a knee restraint.

The test vehicle, built by the Calspan Corp. of Buffalo, N.Y., with Chrysler Corp. as a major subcontractor, is in the final stage of evaluation which involves both non-destructive and destructive testing in the U.S. and overseas. The foreign testing is conducted through international agreements with the governments of England, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Japan. The overseas tests facilitate the exchange of scientific and engineering data and ideas in automotive design.

The Calspan test car also posted a fuel economy of 28.2 miles per gallon, better mileage than the 1985 fleetwide federal standard of 27.5 miles per gallon. "If the entire fleet of U.S. cars had this level of fuel economy, the fuel savings would be 2.6 million barrels of oil per day, or 30 percent of the fuel consumed today in highway transportation," Claybrook said.

- more -

RESULTS OF 40 MPH HEAD-ON CRASH TEST OF U.S.

RESEARCH SAFETY VEHICLE IN JAPAN

JULY 17, 1979

	HEAD INJURY CRITERION	CHEST ACCEL. "G's"	UPPER LEG LOAD POUNDS	
MAXIMUM			Each Leg	
ALLOWABLE*	1000	60	2250	
			LEFT	RIGHT
CALSPAN RSV				
DRIVER	319	50	1791	1023
FRONT PASSENGER	444	40	1087	1463
JAPANESE CAR				
DRIVER	1612	132	745	1243
FRONT PASSENGER	1124	58	603	1624

*Limits of Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard

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Office of Assistant Secretary for Governmental and Public Affairs

Washington, D.C. 20590

CONSUMER ADVISORY

FOR RELEASE MONDAY
August 20, 1979

NHTSA -- 68-79 (PARIS)
Tel. 202-426-9550

DOT IS EXAMINING GENERAL MOTORS RECALL

The U.S. Department of Transportation said today it is looking into a General Motors Corp. recall involving possible wheel bearing failures in an estimated two million 1978 vehicles. The government wants to know if the problem is being corrected properly and if all of the potentially affected cars are being recalled.

The recall, announced by General Motors in mid-July, covers the entire 1978 production of Buick Century and Regal, Chevrolet Malibu and Monte Carlo, Oldsmobile Cutlass, Pontiac Lemans and Grand Prix intermediate-sized cars as well as GMC Caballero and Chevrolet El Camino light trucks.

The department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration said it is conducting an engineering analysis of the remedy proposed by GM to correct the alleged defect.

The recall, announced after increasing pressure from both NHTSA and Canadian safety officials, is to correct what GM identifies as inadequate lubrication of the front outer wheel bearing. The wheel bearing grease may be affected by temperatures in the wheel bearing during use.

NHTSA said that while the recall covers intermediate-sized cars, it wants to examine any reports of front wheel bearing failures in other 1978 GM model automobiles, including compact, sub-compact and full-sized vehicles.

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GM's proposed remedy involves installation of new outer wheel bearings, new bearing lubricant and coating the spindle with additional lubrication. New grease retainer caps also will be installed.

The Canadian investigation began last October when a 1978 Buick Regal went out of control and rolled over, killing a passenger. Several months later, after receiving an increasing number of reports of wheel bearing failure, NHTSA began an engineering analysis of the problem in 1978 intermediate model GM vehicles.

Symptoms of inadequate wheel bearing lubrication usually involve a grinding noise or front-end vibration. These symptoms may not always be present. If an owner experiences this problem, the wheels should be inspected immediately.

NHTSA said continued operation of a vehicle with inadequate bearing lubrication can cause the front wheel outer bearing to fail, which could result in damage to the spindle and loss of vehicle control or momentary loss of front disc braking. Obtaining normal brake operation under these circumstances then requires more than one application of the brake pedal.

The federal safety agency said it has an estimated 700 reports linked to front wheel bearing failures. Of these, approximately 100 deal with failures in other GM vehicles besides intermediate-sized cars. Most of the failures occurred below 24,000 miles, considerably below the 30,000 miles maintenance check on front wheel bearings recommended by GM in the owner manuals. In addition to the Canadian death, there are 17 reported accidents but no fatalities in the United States due to such failures.

The government wants owners who have experienced this problem to write to NHTSA, 400 Seventh St., SW, Washington, D.C. 20590, or to call, toll free, the Auto Safety Hotline on 800-424-9393 (426-0123 in the D.C. metropolitan area).

This is the third largest recall in GM history, surpassed only by the 1977 recall of 2.2 million 1976 cars for a power brake problem, and the 1971 recall of 6.7 million vehicles for defective engine mounts.

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CONSUMER ADVISORY

FOR RELEASE WEDNESDAY
August 22, 1979

NHTSA 69-79 (MCCAHILL)
Tel. 202-426-9550

SECOND SESSION SCHEDULED FOR TRUCK SAFETY MEETING

The U. S. Department of Transportation said today it will extend a Sept. 10 public meeting on heavy truck safety until noon the following day to allow more time for all interested parties to participate.

The meeting will be held in Washington, D.C., in the Department of Commerce auditorium, 14th St. and Constitution Ave., N.W. The revised schedule calls for a 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. session on Sept. 10 and a continuation session from 9 a.m. until approximately noon on Sept. 11.

The department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has made truck safety a priority, and scheduled the meeting in response to steadily increasing traffic accidents involving heavy trucks.

NHTSA Administrator Joan Claybrook said, "The reaction we are getting to the meeting indicates we will need a day-and-a-half instead of just one day to allow everyone to be heard and to fully air all of the truck drivers' concerns."

A toll-free telephone number, (800) 424-9344, has been established so any interested person can call for more information and offer ideas and suggestions for the meeting.

"We hope to attract everyone associated with the trucking industry, including drivers," Claybrook said. "We are asking them to come to Washington with candid suggestions on how to build safer trucks. The professional truck driver, with years of road experience, is particularly qualified to comment on highway safety."

Persons who want to participate in the meeting but lack the funds to do so may apply for financial assistance by writing to Ann Mitchell, Office of Public Affairs & Consumer Participation, NHTSA, Room 5232, Washington, D.C. 20590.

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According to NHTSA, from 1975 to 1978 there was a 41 percent increase in fatalities involving occupants of heavy trucks. Similarly, almost 30 percent of the increase in automobile deaths over the same period is attributable to fatalities occurring in accidents with heavy duty trucks.

Among the topics on the agenda for discussion during the fall meeting are: tires, brakes, rear underride protection, lighting, fuel system integrity, crash protection, ride quality, splash and spray control and interior noise levels.

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Office of Assistant Secretary for Governmental and Public Affairs
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CONSUMER ADVISORY

FOR RELEASE FRIDAY
August 24, 1979

NHTSA 70-79 (Ames)
Tel No. (202) 426-0670

DOT SETS DUAL HEARING
ON FIAT RUSTING PROBLEM

The U.S. Department of Transportation said today it will hold a public hearing on the investigation of excessive rusting and corrosion of the underbodies on the 124 and 850 model Fiat automobiles built during 1970-1974 and imported by Fiat Motors of North America, Inc.

The hearing, scheduled for Sept. 26 and ordered by Joan Claybrook, head of the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, is to determine whether Fiat has reasonably met its obligations in carrying out a recent recall campaign for excessive rust and corrosion on the undercarriage of its 1970-1971 Model 850 Spyder vehicles.

In addition, the hearing will address NHTSA's recent reinstatement of an initial determination that a safety related defect exists in 1970-1974 Fiat Model 124 vehicles due to a similar rusting problem.

This dual hearing will be held at 10 a.m. in Room 2230 of the DOT Headquarters Building, 400 Seventh St., SW, Washington, D.C. Fiat, and any other interested parties, including consumers, will be given the opportunity to present testimony, data and information on both issues.

On Jan. 16, 1979, the NHTSA notified Fiat that it had made an initial determination that a safety related defect exists in the 124 and 850 models of the Fiat automobile built during 1970-1974. This determination was based on an investigation which established that the underbodies of these cars are subject to premature rusting and corrosion, which causes bending or separation of such structural components as suspension systems, rocker panels, floor pans and steering components. These conditions can be the cause of accidents and injuries.

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On March 16, 1979, the safety agency suspended its initial determination on the Fiat Model 124 for sixty days, after reaching an agreement with Fiat under which only the 1970-1971 Model 850 Spyder vehicles would be recalled. That agreement was reached after Fiat gave assurances that the rusting problem was concentrated in the 1970-1971 Model 850 Spyders due to assembly problems. Since the March agreement, the NHTSA has received information from consumers indicating that Fiat has repurchased some Model 124 vehicles from owners who have complained of rusting.

NHTSA Administrator Joan Claybrook said that "from the information we have received it appears that Fiat's repurchase program for the 124 Model may not meet the agency's statutory recall requirements."

When the safety agency announced the recall of the Model 850 vehicles in March, it indicated that owners of affected vehicles had a right to petition the agency and challenge the manufacturer's remedy, if dissatisfied. Shortly after Fiat initiated the campaign, the agency began receiving complaints from owners of these recalled vehicles.

These complaints have dealt with:

- The price Fiat is offering owners to repurchase corroded vehicles.
- Alleged coercive tactics used to make the owners sell their cars back to the company.
- Fiat's repair policy under the repair procedures of the recall.
- Allegations that Fiat was limiting participation in the recall campaign to Model 850 owners showing proof of current vehicle registration. This limitation would exclude vehicle owners whose vehicles were so badly corroded that their owners put them in storage rather than register them for use on the highway.

Interested persons (including the manufacturer) may make written or oral presentations concerning the Model 850 or the Model 124 issue. Persons wishing to make oral presentations are requested to notify, in writing, Joanne Murianka, Office of Defects Investigation, NHTSA, Washington, D.C. 20590, or call 202-426-2850 before the close of business on Sept. 18, 1979.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
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U.S. Department of Transportation
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Office of Assistant Secretary for Governmental and Public Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20590

FOR RELEASE MONDAY
August 27, 1979

CONSUMER ADVISORY

NHTSA --72-79 (PARIS)
Tel. 202-426-9550

NHTSA ANNOUNCES INITIAL DEFECT IN GM JACKS

The U. S. Department of Transportation announced today it has made an initial determination that a safety related defect exists in the original equipment jack provided with certain 1975 and 1976 Chevrolet and GMC light duty trucks.

Involved in the investigation are Chevrolet C-10, P-10, G-20, and GMC C-15, P-15 and G-25 light duty trucks. Approximately 954,000 of these vehicles were equipped with the jacks in question, which General Motors designates as model 344788.

The department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration disclosed the finding in a letter to General Motors Corp. and said the jacks . . . "when used under roadside conditions . . . are subject to failures, which can result in injuries and property damage."

NHTSA said it has received five reports of failures from consumers, including three instances of jacks dropping the vehicles they were supporting, resulting in one injury. In addition, GM has received 57 other reports of failures, including instances of jacks dropping the vehicles they were supporting, resulting in four injuries.

The Model 344788 jack is of screw-type design, but has the appearance of a hydraulic jack. It is positioned under the axle of the vehicle and used to raise the chassis in order to change tires.

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The federal safety agency said it conducted tests on 27 of these jacks under roadside and simulated roadside conditions. Two model 344788 jacks tested dropped the vehicle they were supporting, and 12 others were severely deformed or cracked.

NHTSA also said that the number of warranty claims and the number of replacement parts sold are excessive for a component which is not in regular use. Consumers are warned that there are no known pre-failure symptoms.

Owners of these jacks are urged to avoid using them, if possible. If the jacks must be used to change a tire, these precautions should be taken:

- o Select a flat, even surface for the jacking operation.
- o Try to lighten the vehicle load.
- o Stop raising the vehicle immediately if the jack begins to bend or deform.
- o Place sturdy wooden blocks or other support under the axle after the jack is extended.
- o Never get under the vehicle while it is being supported by the jack.

NHTSA has scheduled a public meeting on the defect determination for Oct. 4 at 10 a.m. in Room 2230 of the DOT headquarters building, 400 Seventh St., SW, Washington, D.C., to allow General Motors to present its data, views and arguments in the case.

Interested individuals also will have an opportunity to present their views and persons who want to participate in the meeting should contact Joanne Murianka at 202-426-2850 before Sept. 28 to schedule their presentations.

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FOR RELEASE THURSDAY
August 29, 1979

NHTSA -- 74-79 (McCahill)
Tel. 202-426-9550

MOPED ACCIDENT RATE PREDICTED TO SOAR

By 1984, as many as 1,200 moped riders will be killed annually in highway accidents, a report released today by the U. S. Department of Transportation predicts.

The study, done for the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, forecasts an increase in the number of mopeds in the United States by 1984 from the current half-million to 2.5 million. It is expected that between 1.5 and 4 percent of all mopeds will be involved in accidents in any given year. Eleven percent of those accidents will result in serious injury to the moped rider, and 1.2 percent will be fatal, the report predicts.

NHTSA Administrator Joan Claybrook said, "We are very much concerned about the study's projections. The energy situation makes it likely that greater numbers of these vehicles will be used for local transportation, because they are more economical to operate than cars. Steps must be taken to develop safety programs for moped users and other drivers who share the road with them."

"There are two important things that states can do right now," Claybrook continued. "First, all moped users should be advised to wear a safety helmet, preferably a motorcycle helmet, and to wear brightly colored clothing to offset the tendency of motorists to overlook two-wheeled vehicles. Second, since most states combine moped accident statistics with those involving other two-wheeled vehicles, they should change their accident recording and reporting systems so that moped accidents can be identified separately."

A moped is a motor driven cycle capable of speeds up to 30 miles per hour, but which also can be pedaled at lower speeds.

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The maximum speeds for mopeds permitted by the states range from 20 to 30 miles per hour. In three-fourths of the accidents studied, the posted highway speed limit was 35 mph or less, illustrating the potential for danger in moped operation even in traffic moving at low speeds.

Researchers from the Highway Safety Research Center at the University of North Carolina, who conducted the study for NHTSA, found that 80 percent of moped riders are men, but that men and women are equally likely to be involved in an accident. Moped riders were found to be evenly distributed among various age groups of under 25, 25-to-45 and over 45. However, fully half the accidents reported involved a moped rider 21-years-old or less.

About three-fourths of moped accidents occur on city streets, and 40 percent occur at or near intersections. About half are angle or turning accidents, such as occur when a car moving in the same direction makes a right turn in front of the moped. Rear-end collisions accounted for about 10 percent of the accidents studied, with sideswipes causing almost as many. Head-on collisions occurred in only two to five percent of cases.

Moped operators were found to be at fault in accidents slightly more often than other drivers. Failure to yield the right-of-way and improper signalling were the most frequently reported causes of collision.

The study was limited by the fact that moped accident data were available from only 11 states, and because police reports do not include sufficient detail for a thorough examination of accident causes and injuries.

To overcome the limitations of presently available information, NHTSA will soon begin a comprehensive study of the nature and causes of moped accidents. The study will be part of a broader program of moped safety evaluation, which will include an assessment of moped handling characteristics and their accident-avoidance capabilities. The agency is also investigating the need for testing of moped drivers to ensure the safe operation of all vehicles, and it plans to develop a program of education for moped riders.

The report entitled "An Analysis of Mopeds as a Potential Safety Problem in the United States, Vol. 1, Review of the Literature and Data Search," can be obtained by writing to the General Services Division, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 400 Seventh St., SW, Washington, D.C. 20590.

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U.S. Department of Transportation
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Office of Assistant Secretary for Governmental and Public Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20590

FOR RELEASE FRIDAY
September 14, 1979

CONSUMER ADVISORY

NHTSA --75-79 (PARIS)
Tel. 202-426-9550

DOT SETS NEW HEARING DATE ON CAPRI DEFECTS

The public hearing on an initial finding that safety related defects exist in certain Capris manufactured by the Ford Motor Co. has been postponed until Oct. 18, the U.S. Department of Transportation announced today. The original date was Sept. 18.

The hearing was first scheduled by the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to cover defects in the headlight switches of 1971-1972 Capris; front seat backs of 1971-1974 Capris equipped with reclining seats; and manual transmission gear shift levers in 1971-1974 and 1976-1978 Capris.

NHTSA said that Ford plans to recall the vehicles for the headlight switch problem and the hearing will cover only the alleged seat back and gear shift lever failures.

An estimated 420,000 Capris are still in use on the nation's highways.

The Oct. 18 public meeting will permit Ford to present its data, views and arguments concerning the initial determination of defects. The public also is invited to participate in the hearing scheduled to begin at 10 a.m. in Room 2230 of the DOT headquarters building, 400 Seventh St., SW, Washington, D.C.

The federal safety agency said it is possible for the driver's seat back in the 1971-1974 models to collapse toward the rear of the vehicle, making it difficult for the driver to maintain vehicle control. Investigators said the failure is caused by the absence of a weld in the reclining mechanism of the seat. The agency has reports of more than 100 instances of failures, including three accidents.

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NHTSA also said it has received at least 150 reports involving separation of the gear shift lever, including one reported accident. Separation can occur without warning and causes loss of ability to control the speed of the vehicle.

Consumers who have experienced seat back or gear shift problems are urged to notify NHTSA by calling the Office of Defects Investigation at 202-426-2850 or by writing to NHTSA, 400 Seventh St., SW, Washington, D.C. 20590.

Persons interested in participating in the meeting should contact Joann Murianka at 202-426-2850 before Oct. 10.

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CONSUMER ADVISORY

FOR RELEASE WEDNESDAY
September 19, 1979

NHTSA --76-79 (MCCAHILL)
TEL. 202-426-9550

DOT URGES GREATER EFFORT
IN CHILD SAFETY CAMPAIGN

Emphasizing the importance of its Kids 'N Cars" nationwide safety campaign to promote traffic safety for children, the U.S. Department of Transportation today warned that more effort is needed to reduce child pedestrian and bicyclist fatalities.

Explaining that there have been nearly 8,000 pedestrian deaths in each of the last four years, the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration said that close to 1,800 of these fatalities each year are children under age 15.

NHTSA added that, some 1,000 bicyclists of all ages also are killed and another 80,000 injured, each year.

According to NHTSA Administrator Joan Claybrook, the safety agency is urging states and local communities and neighborhood organizations to focus attention on child pedestrian and bicycle safety. Pedestrians and bicycle riders, particularly children, must be encouraged to be cautious when crossing at an intersection, looking left, right and left again before entering or crossing a street. Even under the best circumstances, bicycle riders require an extra measure of safety awareness. In a crash with an automobile, a bicyclist or pedestrian has little protection and is often harmed, Claybrook said.

"Children tend to forget about the hazards of motor vehicle traffic. They should be reminded frequently about crossing streets and riding their bikes safely. A reminder every morning would not be too often. And parents can reinforce good safety habits by practicing the same ones," said Claybrook.

The safety agency also urged motorists to expect the unexpected, particularly in residential areas where children are usually busy at play and forgetful of traffic around them.

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"Who among us has not witnessed a close call between a child at play in the street and a motor vehicle? Unfortunately, the screech of tires, the sudden terror and the angry shouts from an equally terrified motorist have become a part of growing up in this country," Claybrook said.

"Even driving at a normal rate of speed, too often there is not enough time to stop when a child runs or rides out from the curb or from between parked cars in pursuit of a ball, another bicycle or a passing ice cream truck," Claybrook noted.

NHTSA suggests 3 simple reminders for child pedestrians:

- o Cross at intersection if one is near.
- o Stop at the curb or edge of roadway and look left, right, and left again and then cross carefully.
- o Be extra cautious when approaching a school bus or ice cream truck, and don't run. Approach from the front where you can be seen.

The "Kids 'N Cars" campaign includes meetings around the country sponsored by local organizations to explain the urgent need for child car restraint systems and to discuss their proper use. Pedestrian safety and bicycle safety are part of the campaign because so many children are killed and injured in these types of traffic accidents.

Because public interest and support for child passenger safety on a voluntary basis is essential, NHTSA is making printed and audio-visual material available dealing with child restraints. It also is distributing this material to 3,000 newspapers, radio and television stations around the country, asking for their help in conveying this information to the public.

For further information about child pedestrian or bicycle safety contact:

Larry Pavlinski
NHTSA NTS-14
400 Seventh St., SW
Washington, D.C. 20590
Tel. 202-426-2180

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U.S. Department of Transportation
news:
Office of Assistant Secretary for Governmental and Public Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20590

FOR RELEASE SUNDAY
SEPTEMBER 23, 1979

NHTSA --80-79 (BOAZ)
Tel. 202-426-9550

AUTO MANUFACTURERS EXCEED 1979 FUEL ECONOMY ESTIMATES

Spurred by a shift in consumer demand, the domestic auto manufacturers are exceeding even their own predictions in meeting the Federal Corporate Average Fuel Economy standard for 1979 model passenger cars, according to the latest data available to the U.S. Department of Transportation.

A comparsion of two reports for the current model year filed with the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration by the four domestic auto makers shows that their pre-model year estimate was at a level of 19.1 miles per gallon, but their actual sales weighted average through the summer was 19.6 mpg. The federal standard for 1979 model passenger cars is 19 mpg.

If the domestic manufacturers sell 10 million cars in 1979, the total fuel savings of the additional .5 mpg fuel economy average would be about 1.34 billion gallons over the lifetime of the 1979 model cars, an average of roughly 134 gallons per car during 100,000 miles of driving.

Manufacturers are required by law to submit two reports each year to the NHTSA, the agency responsible for developing and issuing the fuel economy standards. The first report is a pre-model year estimate including the manufacturer's projected fleet average fuel economy based on projected sales of each of the firm's models. The second report, which was filed this year at the end of July, must include information on new sales estimates based on actual market place experience and a new estimate of the company's fleet average fuel economy.

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NHTSA Administrator Joan Claybrook said, "This is apparently a case in which the consumer has made a major switch in buying preference. This switch has resulted in higher sales of fuel-efficient cars and a decline in sales of gas guzzlers. It should be a clear message to the manufacturers of the need to shift future production to meet this change in consumer demand."

"I think it is a wonderful development which bodes well for potential sales of even more fuel efficient cars as the federal standards get more stringent," Claybrook added.

Under present standards, manufacturers will have to meet a corporate fleet average of 20 mpg in 1980, 22 mpg in 1981, 24 mpg in 1982, 26 mpg in 1983, 27 mpg in 1984 and 27.5 mpg for 1985.

The following table shows the comparative estimates of the domestic car makers for model year 1979 and their actual sales experience.

COMPANY	PRE-MODEL YEAR EST.	MID-MODEL YEAR REPT.	79 DOMESTIC CO. MARKET SHARE PERCENT
GM	19.0	19.7	60
FORD	18.9	19.1	27
CHRYSLER	20.2	20.4	11
AMC	20.1	19.9	2

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
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Office of Assistant Secretary for Governmental and Public Affairs

Washington, D.C. 20590

FOR RELEASE WEDNESDAY
September 26, 1979

NHTSA--83-79 (PARIS)
Tel. 202-426-9550

DOT ASKS PUBLIC'S HELP IN "KIDS 'N CARS" CAMPAIGN

The U.S. Department of Transportation, as part of a nationwide "Kids 'N Cars" safety campaign, today called on organizations at the grassroots level to initiate highway safety projects aimed at increasing the safety of children and young people.

The head of the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Joan Claybrook, urged citizens to work side by side with federal, state and local officials in a bid to reduce the killing and crippling effects of auto accidents.

"We need the help of all citizens if we are going to deal effectively with this public health problem," Claybrook said. "Traffic accidents each year claim the lives of an estimated 670 children up to age five and another 1,160 between the ages of 6 and 15. In addition, as many as 160,000 are injured. Much already has been done by community groups working at the local level. Acting on their own initiative, they have started child restraint loan programs, built community bicycle paths and organized first responder first aid courses."

The federal safety chief noted that local civic and voluntary organizations are eligible to receive federal aid by applying through their local government to the governor's representative for highway safety in their state.

Claybrook stressed the importance of the media role in the national campaign. "Newspapers, radio and television stations are in an excellent position to convey the safety message -- to tell people what they can do and how to get involved in highway safety programs."

Statewide efforts include a variety of programs involving the use of child restraints, pedestrian and bicycle safety, and traffic safety education.

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"In order for any program to work," she said, "person-to-person contact is needed. This is what makes community action so appealing, particularly in the field of highway safety. Citizen participation bridges the gap between scientific expertise and public education. As an example, a volunteer in a car seat loan program can show a new mother, right there in the maternity ward, what a child restraint looks like and how it works."

As examples, Claybrook cited a sampling of citizen group accomplishments:

o In Trenton, N.J., Monroeville, Pa., and Herndon, Va., local Jaycees built a safety town for the community's children. A safety town is a miniature replica of a town or village, complete with streets and child-sized vehicles By moving about in this setting, kindergarten-age children learn to distinguish safe from unsafe traffic situations and how to react.

o Local organizations around the country are sponsoring car seat loan programs, including child birth education groups, day care centers, churches, hospital auxiliaries and health maintenance organizations.

o The Greenville, S.C. Chamber of Commerce helped develop a 2 1/2-mile biketrail which connects the downtown area with three city parks. Bike routes are being built in other communities because citizen groups have pressed for them.

o The East Tennesee Heart Association started a bikeway construction project in Knoxville by getting privately owned tracts of land donated for the project.

o The Colorado Highway Commission and the Duluth, Minn., Department of Planning and Development have published bike route maps.

NHTSA has prepared five publications which tell citizens how they can organize child safety projects in their communities. The publications -- How to Create a Safety Town for Children, How to Involve Teenagers in Highway Safety, How to Get Bike Routes in Your Community, How to Start and Run a Child Restraint Loan Program, and Early Rider -- are available free of charge by writing to:

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, NTS-10
400 Seventh Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20590

# # # # # # # # #

U.S. Department of Transportation
news:
Office of Assistant Secretary for Governmental and Public Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20590

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Monday, October 1, 1979

NHTSA 87-79 (MCCAHILL)
Tel. 202-426-9550

CLAYBROOK REAFFIRMS DOT's COMMITMENT TO AUTOMATIC CRASH STANDARD

The Department of Transportation remains firmly committed to its automatic crash protection standard for future new cars, National Highway Traffic Safety Administrator Joan Claybrook said today. She announced formation of a special task force to address any remaining issues involving air bag performance and occupants who may be "out of position" during crashes.

Claybrook also voiced dismay at a General Motors decision, transmitted to DOT last week, to delay its promised, voluntary introduction of passenger-side air bag protection in its 1981-model cars. She noted that this is the latest in a series of delays by the auto industry to voluntarily make air bags available as options on certain new cars.

"GM has made important improvements in the new generation of its Air Cushion Restraint Systems," Claybrook said, "and we are excited with the work they have done. Thus, it is especially disappointing that on the basis of such conjectural conclusion, GM now has decided to withhold from the market in 1981 a safety system that has been convincingly proven to save many lives and significantly reduce injuries in auto crashes."

GM said its decision was based on indications that ACRS design may have the "potential for risk of injury to unrestrained small children" in car crashes. Children who are out of position might face a risk of injury when the air bag deployed, the automaker claimed.

But Claybrook noted that NHTSA's preliminary analysis of GM's conclusions found that:

-more-

o "The scope of the problem raised by GM, even if it is valid is very narrow and does not in any way detract from the large number of lives that will be saved by this system, including the lives of many children."

o The basis for GM's decision is "fragmentary and speculative." The data used consist of panic braking and GM insurance case information that do not provide "reliable information on this subject."

o "GM's "new" conclusions "could have been hypothesized years ago, and a resolution of any potential problems could have been sought in a much more orderly fashion."

Claybrook stressed that "In the real world, air bag-equipped cars built by GM have been performing very well. Based on all of the data available, DOT does not believe that the out-of-position occupant problems that GM alleges may arise have, in fact, occurred."

Noting that "the lead time between today and the effective date of the automatic crash protection standard, FMVSS 208, is sufficient to resolve any real or imagined problems with air bag technology," Claybrook announced the following actions:

o "First, I have designated a special team of engineers, medical experts, accident data analysts and others to investigate the claims made by GM.

o Second, I have asked this team to review all relevant data from auto companies, air bag suppliers, and other specialists to carry out whatever studies are required to resolve any outstanding issues.

o Third, I am accelerating the Department's advanced work on biomechanics related to understanding the crash injury susceptibility of children compared to child surrogates."

# # # # # # # # # # # #

RECEIVE

10CT79 1441Z

COASTGUARD WSH
10/1/79 TLX-95 NHTSA RS
MS JOAN CLAYBROOK
THIS TELEX IS WRITTEN IN ANSWER TO YOUR INQUIRY CONCERNING THE HYPOTHESIZED PROBLEM OF THE OUT-OF-POSITION CHILD ON THE PASSENGER SIDE OF THE FRONT SEAT. AS YOU ARE AWARE, THE AUTOMOTIVE OCCUPANT PROTECTION ASSOCIATION IS COMPOSED OF SEVERAL INFLATABLE RESTRAINT SYSTEM COMPONENT MANUFACTURERS AND CONTRACT RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT FIRMS ENGAGED IN TRANSPORTATION SAFETY WORK. THE OUT-OF-POSITION OCCUPANT PROBLEM HAS BEEN REVIEWED BY MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION AND THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS REPRESENT OUR VIEWS:
1. THE INFLATABLE RESTRAINT SYSTEM MANUFACTURERS ARE CONFIDENT THAT, WITHIN THE TIME FRAME ESTABLISHED BY THE GOVERNMENT FOR FMVSS-208, THEIR RESTRAINT SYSTEMS CAN BE ENGINEERED TO SUBSTANTIALLY IMPROVE THE CRASH PROTECTION FOR ALL OCCUPANTS IN THE NORMAL CRASH SITUATION FOR WHICH THEY ARE DESIGNED. SYSTEMS HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFULLY DESIGNED AND TESTED THAT MEET OR EXCEED 208 REQUIREMENTS. LIVE PIG AND CHILD DUMMY TESTS HAVE BEEN PERFORMED TO VERIFY THAT THE LATEST SYSTEMS DO NOT CAUSE SIGNIFICANT INJURY FOR OUT-OF-POSITION OCCUPANTS.
2. THE INFLATABLE RESTRAINT SYSTEM IS CURRENTLY THE BEST RESTRAINT SYSTEM AVAILABLE TO PROTECT OTHERWISE UNRESTRAINED SMALL CHILDREN. THIS STATEMENT IS ALSO TRUE FOR OTHER OUT-OF-POSITION FRONT SEAT OCCUPANTS. THE LIFE SAVING AND INJURY REDUCTION FOR BOTH CHILDREN AND ADULTS THROUGH THE USE OF FRONT SEAT PASSENGER INFLATABLE RESTRAINTS WILL FAR OUTWEIGH ANY HYPOTHETICAL PROBLEMS. FURTHERMORE, IT IS ANTICIPATED THAT THESE FRONT SEAT SYSTEMS WILL ALSO BE EFFECTIVE IN RESTRAINING CHILDREN WHO, FROM THE REAR SEAT FLY OVER THE BACK OF THE FRONT SEAT IN A FRONTAL CRASH.
WE URGE YOU TO SEEK THE BEST DATA AVAILABLE TO LAY TO REST THE UNCERTAINTY ASSOCIATED WITH THE OUT-OF-POSITION OCCUPANT, AND PLEDGE OUR ASSISTANCE IN SUPPORT OF THAT ENDEAVOR.
AUTOMOTIVE OCCUPANT PROTECTION ASSOCIATION
DAVID LAMBERT, PRESIDENT

STATEMENT BY

JOAN CLAYBROOK, ADMINISTRATOR
NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATION

OCTOBER 1, 1979

The air bag is the single most important safety device that has ever been developed to protect people from death and serious injury in an automobile crash. The basic technology of air bags was made posssible by automobile industry research and testing that was completed more than eight years ago.

Last week, General Motors Corporation informed us that it is yet again delaying its promised, voluntary introduction of air bag protection for its customers by not offering passenger air bags in its 1981 models. GM says it "may still be able to offer the driver's side option." The Department of Transportation is deeply distressed by GM's decision, and its harmful implications for the motoring public.

To understand why, let's briefly review the history of air bags:

- More than two decades ago, the first patents were obtained for inflatable crash protection systems.
- Eleven years ago, auto industry engineers came to this Department and showed us their impressive research and testing on air bags. The Department responded by issuing its plan to adopt a standard to require such protection in future cars.

- Nine years ago, GM pledged to install air bags voluntarily in one million 1974 model cars and to make air bags standard equipment on all of its 1975 car lines. Ford and Chrysler made similar pledges. Thereafter, for the next several years, Ford and Chrysler sought and won continuing postponement of the standard.
- Six years ago, GM sold its first production cars with air cushions to the public. But instead of building a million of them, or even a hundred thousand, GM built only 10,000 between 1974 and 1976. Most people didn't even know that they could buy cars with air bags, and those that did had a very difficult time buying one from their local GM dealer. A Wall Street Journal survey in 1976 found that GM gave its air bags "no wholehearted promotion; instead, the company and its dealers actively discouraged sales."
- Two years ago, after many years of delay, the Department put into place the standard, FMVSS 208, that will require automatic crash protection for the American motoring public. The standard can be met using either air bags or automatic belts -- both of which have shown their lifesaving capability on the road.

> To provide the automobile companies and their suppliers ample lead time in a period when major product changes were being made to meet fuel economy and emissions standards, the industry was given four years to comply initially with full-size cars, and six years to put automatic crash protection in cars of all sizes.

In light of the many years that have passed since GM's original decision to make air bag protection available to its customers, how does the company now defend its new decision to deprive the public of this lifesaving technology?

In a letter to the Department, GM says that it has based its decision on a concern for the "potential risk of injury to unrestrained small children" in crashes of vehicles equipped with the design chosen by GM for its Air Cushion Restraint System. If GM has developed new and decisive evidence that its air bags do present a risk to small children -- or to anyone else -- that is a serious charge.

Does GM have such new and decisive evidence? We have taken a preliminary look at the limited evidence GM presented to us -- we have not yet reviewed the bulk of the data or test results, but only a limited presentation of GM's conclusions -- and on the basis of that evidence and information from our own

files we have drawn several preliminary conclusions:

- o The scope of the problem raised by GM, even if it is valid, is very narrow and does not in any way detract from the large number of lives that will be saved by this system, including the lives of many children.
- o Nearly every automotive system has some element of risk, and some limitations on its effectiveness. Safety belts, for example, are acknowledged to be superior crash protection devices, but their use occasionally results in injury from forces being concentrated on a vulnerable part of the body. Nevertheless, the tradeoff in terms of saving thousands of lives clearly outweighs these extraordinary and infrequent risks.
- o The basis for GM's decision is fragmentary and speculative. The data used consist of three elements: tests of its air bag performance using animals to simulate the response of small children; automobile crash injury data from the files of GM's insurance subsidiary; and estimates of the frequency of panic braking prior to crashes (during which a child might be thrown against the dashboard) taken from an anecdotal accident file developed for the Department of Transportation by the University of Michigan.

- The animals used by GM to determine the injury response of small children may exaggerate the risk of injury to children. Moreover, GM's significant improvements in its Air Cushion Restraint System have very substantially reduced the potential for animal injury.
- The data on panic braking and the insurance case files cited by GM are not new. Further, the panic braking estimate comes from selected DOT accident investigations that are not representative of automobile collisions generally, and have no correlation with the GM insurance file. We do not believe that is a reliable source of information on this subject.
- The conclusions drawn by GM could have been hypothesized years ago, and a resolution of any potential problems could have been sought in a much more orderly fashion.
- In the real world, air bag-equipped cars built by General Motors have been performing well. Based on all of the data available, the Department of Transportation does not believe that the problems GM now alleges may arise have, in fact, occurred.

GM is not a company that can be ignored. It dominates the American automobile market, and its transportation research and development resources dwarf those of the Federal Government or any other auto manufacturer or supplier. GM's advertising budget alone is more than five times the entire budget of this agency. GM employs 100 times the number of automotive engineers employed by the Government. GM is the company that built the lunar rovers used by the astronauts to tour the moon. When it wanted to be, GM has been a leader in transportation research and development of the world's most advanced sort.

Yet GM now says, more than 20 years after the birth of air bag technology, that it needs to do more research. GM has made important improvements in the new generation of its Air Cushion Restraint System, and we are excited with the work they have done. Thus it is especially disappointing that, on the basis of such conjectural conclusions, GM now has decided to withhold from the market in 1981 a safety system that has been convincingly proven to save many lives and significantly reduce injuries in auto crashes.

An historical parallel to this situation occurred when the initial motor vehicle safety standards were issued in 1967. The agency had proposed a standard requiring installation of full lap and shoulder belts for the front outboard seating positions of all cars. Just months before the effective date of that standard, we received an alarmed call from GM about

"new information" of potential hazards to people in crashes if they wore the shoulder belts. GM's experts showed the Department a film of crash tests and other data purporting to demonstrate that by restraining the movement of front seat passengers (into the steering wheel or instrument panel), shoulder harnesses would encourage violent head contact between those occupants and people in the back seat who would move forward in the crash. This "newly discovered hazard" was sufficient reason, according to GM's experts, to postpone the implementation of the standard requiring shoulder belt installation.

The Government was put in a very difficult position. The standard was about to take effect, and although the evidence presented by GM was highly speculative, it would certainly concern the public if it was valid. On the basis of the research that had been carried out on safety belts, the agency did not have specific evidence with which to refute GM's allegations, but did have evidence that overall, lap and shoulder belts would substantially increase the safety of the American motoring public. To postpone the standard, as GM was requesting, would have sentenced many Americans to death or disabling injury in automobile crashes.

In an effort to obtain valid information to refute GM, the agency issued a worldwide request for information on the performance of safety belts. An innovative foreign company,

Volvo, responded that it had been equipping its cars with shoulder harnesses for some years, and had collected extensive data on their performance in the field. Volvo provided definitive evidence that not only was GM's speculation groundless, but that lap and shoulder belts provided excellent crash protection in the real world. The standard went into effect as planned, and tens of thousands of Americans are now living and healthy as a result.

Unlike 1967, the lead time between today and the effective date of the automatic crash protection standard, FMVSS 208, is sufficient to resolve any real or imagined problems with air bag technology. Therefore, I am today announcing the following actions:

- First, I have designated a special team of engineers, medical experts, accident data analysts, and others to investigate the claims made by GM.
- Second, I have asked this team to review all relevant data from the auto companies, air bag suppliers, and other specialists to immediately carry out whatever studies are required to resolve any outstanding issues.
- Third, I am accelerating the Department's advanced work on biomechanics related to understanding the crash injury susceptibility of children compared to child surrogates.

Finally, I want to reiterate the Department of Transportation's commitment to automatic crash protection, and to the timely implementation of FMVSS 208 on schedule, beginning two years from now on September 1, 1981.

Environmental Activities Staff
General Motors Corporation
General Motors Technical Center
Warren, Michigan 48090

Betsy ANCKER-JOHNSON
Vice President

September 27, 1979

The Honorable Joan B. Claybrook
Administrator
National Highway Traffic Administration
Nassif Building
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Ms. Claybrook:

Thank you for the opportunity to review with you why we feel we must delay introduction of inflatable restraints on our 1981 model cars.

Through extensive development testing, we became concerned about the potential for risk of injury to unrestrained small children. Our studies suggested that due to the effect of pre-impact braking on unrestrained children, or because they might not be seated properly at the time of restraint deployment, they might be exposed to inflation forces capable of producing significant injury.

We then modified our plans to introduce this option at the start of the 1981 model year, electing instead to work towards the introduction of an improved system by the middle of that year. New tests have been conducted and evaluated. The result of these tests enabled us to make a series of changes in the passenger system under development which have partially reduced the risk, as you know.

However, as we discussed with you on Tuesday, we have determined from a study of accident statistics and our inflatable restraint test results that unrestrained small children who would otherwise survive an impact without significant harm could, by reason of the deployment of the restraint itself, be exposed to serious injury. We need to make further progress to reduce the risk to small children.

Many fundamental questions still need to be addressed if we are to measure adequately and control inflation-force risk of inflatable restraints. General Motors has now conducted nearly 10,000 deployment tests in our work on inflatable restraints, and recently has developed new techniques for evaluating this risk. However, engineers and physicians need much more information on child injury tolerances and improved child-test dummies to assist with the design of an inflatable restraint posing less threat to small children.

As we suggested Tuesday, General Motors recommends that a seminar addressing crucial questions of this nature be held for advancement of the inflatable restraint concept. We urge you to sponsor such a seminar as soon as possible. We would be pleased to contribute a number of papers describing new information developed in recent months.

We have worked aggressively towards resolving our concerns about the safety of small children, but now we have run out of lead time for even a late introduction during the 1981 model year. Accordingly, we deem it inadvisable to offer a passenger-side inflatable restraint option in the 1981 model year. However, we are continuing our engineering development efforts with the goal of introducing such an option on full-size cars in 1982. Also, we are conducting further tests on the driver restraint, as we discussed with you, and may still be able to offer the driver-side option during the 1981 model year. We also still plan to offer automatic belts on the 1980 Chevette and on some 1981 models.

Again, it is our intent to continue our development efforts, and we will keep you apprised of our progress.

Sincerely,

Betsy Ancker-Johnson
Vice President

U.S. Department of Transportation
news:
Office of Assistant Secretary for Governmental and Public Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20590

FOR RELEASE WEDNESDAY
OCTOBER 3, 1979

NHTSA --88-79 (PARIS)
Tel. 202-426-9550

CONSUMER ADVISORY

DOT HOLDS FIAT HEARING ON RUST AND CORROSION PROBLEM

Joan Claybrook, the head of the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, is presiding today at a public hearing on alleged safety-related defects due to rust and corrosion in certain Fiat automobiles.

The hearing, in room 2230 of the DOT headquarters building, Washington, D.C., is part of a government investigation that centers on excessive rusting and corrosion of the underbodies on the 124 and 850 model Fiat cars built during 1970-1974 and imported by Fiat Motors of North America, Inc.

The hearing was ordered by Claybrook to determine whether Fiat has reasonably met its obligations in carrying out a recent recall campaign for excessive rust and corrosion on the undercarriage of its 1970-1971 Model 850 Spyder vehicles.

In addition, the hearing will address NHTSA's recent reinstatement of an initial determination that a safety-related defect exists in 1970-1974 Fiat Model 124 vehicles due to a similar rusting problem, and whether Fiat has undertaken an unannounced recall campaign of the Model 124 which does not comply with requirements of the law. Sixteen Fiat owners, as well as representatives of Fiat, are scheduled to testify at the hearing.

Fiat sold more than 180,000 of the involved vehicles and over 100,000 are still on the road.

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The hearing originally was scheduled for Sept. 26, but was delayed one week pending a federal court review of Fiat's request for an injunction to postpone the government proceeding. The injunction was denied.

On Jan. 16, 1979, the NHTSA notified Fiat of its initial determination that a safety-related defect exists in the 124 and 850 models of the Fiat automobile built during 1970-1974. The determination was based on an investigation which indicated that the underbodies of these cars are subject to premature rusting and corrosion. This can cause bending or separation of such components as suspension systems, floor pans, steering components and weakening of structural underbody of the vehicles. These conditions can cause accidents and injuries.

On March 16, 1979, the safety agency suspended its initial finding on the Fiat Model 124 for 60 days, after reaching an agreement with Fiat under which only the 1970-1971 Model 850 Spyder vehicles would be recalled. That agreement came after Fiat gave assurances that the rusting problem was concentrated in the 1970-1971 Model 850 Spyders due to assembly problems. On March 27, 1979 Fiat declared that its 1970 and 1971 model 850 vehicles contained a defect and began a recall action.

When the safety agency announced the recall of the Model 850 vehicles in March, it indicated that owners of affected vehicles had a right to petition the agency and challenge the manufacturer's remedy, if dissatisfied. Shortly after Fiat initiated the campaign, the agency began receiving complaints from owners of these recalled vehicles.

The complaints have dealt with:

- o The price Fiat is offering owners to repurchase corroded vehicles.
- o Alleged coercive tactics used to make the owners sell their cars back to the company.
- o Fiat's repair policy under the repair procedures of the recall.
- o Allegations that Fiat was limiting participation in the recall campaign to Model 850 owners showing proof of current vehicle registration. This limitation would exclude vehicle owners whose vehicles were so badly corroded that their owners put them in storage rather than register them for use on the highway.

NHTSA has also received complaints from owners of model 124 vehicles concerning structural rust and corrosion. In addition it learned that Fiat had repurchased some model 124 vehicles after inspecting them and allegedly declaring them unsafe. This information led the agency to reinstate its initial determination that 1970 to 1974 model 124 Fiats contained a defect.

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U.S. Department of Transportation

news:

Office of Assistant Secretary for Governmental and Public Affairs

Washington, D.C. 20590

FOR RELEASE WEDNESDAY
October 10, 1979

NHTSA 89-79 (PARIS)
Tel. 202-426-9550

PRESIDENT NAMES 12 MEMBERS TO DOT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

President Carter has announced the appointment of 12 members to serve on the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Safety Advisory Committee.

They will join those currently on the 35-member committee to advise and consult with Secretary of Transportation Neil Goldschmidt on federal highway safety programs administered by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the Federal Highway Administration.

The new members, who will serve terms expiring March 15, 1982, include:

Peter J. Allen, Director, Century Club, San Jose, Calif.

R. V. Durham, Director, Safety & Health Department, International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Washington, D.C.

Frances H. Goodwin, Associate Judge, Municipal Court, City of Dallas, Dallas, Texas. Judge Goodwin has been reappointed after having served a 1 year term.

John Landen, Vice President, Traffic Control Products, 3M Co., St. Paul, Minn.

Daniel F. Portis, Portis Mercantile Co., Lepanto, Ark.

Deborah Richards, Chairman of the Board, Action for Child Transportation Safety, Bothell, Wash.

-more-

Peter W. Rodino, III, Attorney, Rodino and Forman, Newark, N. J.

Adele Spielberger, Governor's Representative for Highway Safety and Chief, Bureau of Highway Safety, Tallahassee, Fla.

Carl Serna, Director, Project Development Division, New Mexico State Highway Department, Santa Fe, N. M.

Lawrence Stern, President, Sterns Transport, Inc., Bradley Beach, N. J.

William Mallory, Adjunct Associate Professor, University of Cincinnati, and Member, Ohio House of Representatives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

To fill the unexpired term (March 15, 1980) created by Deborah Kaplan's resignation:

Dr. Patricia Waller, Associate Director, Driver Studies, Highway Safety Research Center, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, N. C.

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FOR RELEASE THURSDAY
October 11, 1979

NHTSA -- 85-79 (McCahill)
Tel. 202-426-9550

DOT TO HOST INTERNATIONAL
AUTO FUEL ECONOMY CONFERENCE

The first international conference of fuel economy experts from the major automotive manufacturing countries will be held Oct. 31 - Nov. 2, the U.S. Department of Transportation announced today.

The department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration is sponsoring the First International Automotive Fuel Economy Research Conference, bringing together leading researchers from Japan, Italy, the United Kingdom, Canada, Sweden, France, Germany and the United States.

The conference will be held at the Sheraton National Hotel in Arlington, Va., just outside Washington, D.C. Sessions will begin at 9 a.m. each day.

NHTSA Administrator Joan Claybrook said, "As the agency of the U.S. Government responsible for fuel economy in automobiles, we are especially proud to be the catalyst for what we expect will be an annual opportunity for the world's leading automotive scientists to share ideas and technologies."

Claybrook explained that the U.S. now uses 17.1 million barrels of oil per day, of which about 45 percent is imported. Transportation of all kinds uses up 53 percent of the total supply, while automobiles alone use 26 percent. Existing NHTSA fuel economy standards will result in automobiles alone saving about 321.4 million barrels of gasoline in 1985.

"Even with these improvements, the growing worldwide energy crisis demands more innovation and cooperation from the auto industry here and abroad to produce the most efficient fuel systems possible," Claybrook added.

- more -

Fifty-one research papers have been selected for presentation and discussion at the sessions, all of which will be on topics within the following general subject areas:

- o Future Powertrain Concepts
- o A Systems Approach to Improved Fuel Economy
- o Diesel Engine Technology
- o Current Spark Ignition Engines
- o Vehicle Design and Materials
- o Heavy Duty Trucks
- o The Market and the Consumer
- o Improved Transmissions and Hybrid Vehicle Concepts

The conference is being held in October in observance of International Energy Conservation Month.

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CONSUMER ADVISORY

FOR RELEASE WEDNESDAY
October 17, 1979

NHTSA -- 92-79 (Paris)
Tel. 202-426-9550

FORD AGREES TO CAPRIS RECALL

The Ford Motor Co. has agreed to recall certain Capri automobiles because of safety related defects, the U.S. Department of Transportation announced today.

The recall involves 1971-1973 Capris for failure of the reclining front seat backs and 1971-1974 and 1976-1978 Capris for separation of the manual transmission gear shift lever.

The department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration last month scheduled an Oct. 18 public hearing to give the company a chance to respond to the agency's initial finding that safety related defects exist in the Capris. Because the vehicles are being recalled, the hearing will not be held.

Last month, Ford agreed to recall 1971 and 1972 Capris because of a defect in the headlight switch.

Joan Claybrook, head of the NHTSA, said, "We are delighted that Ford has agreed to initiate this recall campaign and hope the owners respond by getting these defects corrected as quickly as possible."

NHTSA's initial determination also covered the seat backs in 1974 Capris, but the 1974 model vehicles have not been included in the recall. Ford has pointed to differences in construction of the seat as well as a significantly smaller number of reported failures in 1974 models. The agency, therefore, will close its investigation of 1974 Capri seat backs if no new information warrants further action.

NHTSA has called on consumers who have experienced a problem with these seats to notify the government. They can do this by calling the toll-free Auto Safety Hotline, 800-424-9393 (Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, 426-0123), or by writing to the Office of Defects Investigation, NHTSA, 400 Seventh St., SW, Washington, D.C. 20590.

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Regarding the seat back failures, NHTSA said its investigation showed it is possible for the driver's seat back to collapse toward the rear of the vehicle, making it difficult for the driver to maintain vehicle control. The failure apparently is caused by the absence of a required weld in the structure of the seat. The agency received reports of more than 500 instances of failures, including three accidents.

NHTSA also said it had received at least 250 reports involving separation of the gear shift lever, including one reported accident. Separation can occur without warning and causes loss of ability to control the vehicle.

Ford will be sending notification letters to all owners of the affected vehicles informing them of the recall and that the defects will be corrected free of charge.

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Office of Assistant Secretary for Governmental and Public Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20590

FOR RELEASE WEDNESDAY
October 17, 1979

NHTSA --93-79 (PARIS)
Tel. 202-426-9550

DOT ACTS TO PREVENT DOWNGRADING SAFETY OF TRUCK BRAKES

The U.S. Department of Transportation moved today to prevent a serious downgrading in the safety of the brake systems now used on heavy duty trucks, which could lead to an increase in the already rising number of accidents involving large trucks.

The department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has learned that several manufacturers are considering removing front axle service brakes from some of their vehicles as a means of reducing truck weight and costs. NHTSA test data indicate that such action could lengthen stopping distances at 60 miles per hour by 36 to 139 feet - - increases of up to 66 percent.

In order to prevent a weakening of truck brake systems, NHTSA has issued a notice of proposed rulemaking that would require heavy duty trucks, truck-tractors and trailers weighing more than 10,000 pounds to be equipped with service brakes that act on each wheel. Since this is now the practice in the industry, the agency's action would not result in additional costs for either the manufacturers or the truck owners.

NHTSA Administrator Joan Claybrook said, "At a time when serious accidents and fatalities to truckers and other persons involved in truck accidents are rising, the manufacturers should be doing everything they can to improve safety. Instead some are contemplating an action that would make accidents even more likely."

Fatalities involving heavy truck accidents have risen over 40 percent since 1975 and there was a 30 percent increase in automobile occupant deaths during the same period attributable to crashes involving heavy trucks.

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Ultimately, the proposed rule would become part of the new Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard 130, Heavy Duty Vehicle Brake Systems. When it is issued in its entirety, this standard will replace FMVSS 121, Air Brake Systems and a part of Standard 105-75, Hydraulic Brake Systems.

Some major provisions of Standard 121 were invalidated by a federal court last year. It was learned that as an indirect result of that decision, some truck makers were considering a reduction in braking capability of their heavy duty trucks.

Since the NHTSA proposal would impose no additional burdens on manufacturers, it would become effective as soon as it is published as a final rule in the Federal Register.

Interested persons are invited to submit comments on the proposal by Dec. 3, 1979 to the Docket Section, Room 5108, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 400 Seventh St., SW, Washington, D.C. 20590.

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U.S. Department of Transportation
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Office of Assistant Secretary for Governmental and Public Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20590

FOR RELEASE WEDNESDAY
October 24, 1979

NHTSA -- 94-79 (Paris)
Tel. 202-426-9550

DOT PROPOSES IMPROVED BRAKES FOR LIGHT TRUCKS AND VANS

In an effort to stem the rising number of fatalities in accidents involving light trucks, vans and multi-purpose passenger vehicles, the U. S. Department of Transportation has proposed a rule to improve the braking systems of these vehicles.

The department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration wants to extend the requirements of its standard on hydraulic brake systems (Standard 105-75) to vehicles with a gross vehicle weight rating of 10,000 pounds or less. The standard currently applies only to passenger cars and school buses.

Joan Claybrook, head of the NHTSA, said, "Adoption of our proposed rule should reduce the present disparity between the stopping capability of many light trucks and vans and that of the small and lighter passenger cars on the road today."

Claybrook said, "Unless action is taken to improve the accident avoidance capability of these vehicles, the number of accidents involving light trucks, buses and vans will increase markedly along with a corresponding increase in fatalities and injuries."

Since 1975, sales of light trucks, vans and on/off road vehicles have increased substantially and despite a recent sales slump are expected to continue growing at a rapid rate. As the population of these vehicles has increased, so has the number of deaths to their drivers and passengers and to occupants of other vehicles.

Statistics collected by NHTSA show that light truck, van and multipurpose passenger vehicle occupant fatalities rose from 4,672 in 1975 to 6,585 in 1978, a 41 percent increase. During that same period, there was only a 7.4 percent increase in passenger car occupant fatalities.

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The current standard requires passenger cars to stop in 194 feet from 60 miles per hour in a lightly loaded condition. The government proposes a stopping distance of 216 feet for trucks, buses and vans under 8,000 pounds, and a range of stopping distances of from 228 to 242 feet for lightly loaded trucks, buses and vans weighing between 8,000 and 10,000 pounds. One number within this stopping range will be selected for the final rule.

In addition, the proposal sets requirements covering brake fade (deterioration of brake performance due to temperature increase) and parking brake grade holding ability.

The proposed rule also would upgrade the performance requirements for school buses and extend the standard on a limited basis to heavier vehicles weighing more than 10,000 pounds.

All trucks, buses and multi-purpose passenger vehicles equipped with hydraulic brakes regardless of weight, would have to meet requirements for brake system failure warning systems, provide braking capability in the event of a partial failure of the service brake system, and meet master cylinder reservoir capacity and labeling requirements.

Comments on the proposed rules should be submitted to the NHTSA by Feb. 15, 1980, and should be addressed to the Docket Section, National Highway Traffic Safety Adminstration, Room 5108, 400 Seventh St., S.W., Washington, D.C. 20590.

Subject to the availability of funds, NHTSA is offering financial assistance to all qualified individuals and organizations who are financially unable to participate in this rulemaking proceeding. Applications for aid should be submitted in writing prior to Dec. 3, 1979, to Ann E. Mitchell, Office of Consumer Participation, NHTSA, Room 5232, 400 Seventh St., SW, Washington, D.C. 20590.

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Office of Assistant Secretary for Governmental and Public Affairs
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FOR RELEASE FRIDAY
November 9, 1979

NHTSA -- 96-79 (Paris)
Tel. 202-426-9550

CAR DEALERS FINED FOR NOT DISPLAYING GAS MILEAGE GUIDES

Twenty-one new car dealers have been fined for violating the section of federal law requiring them to display and stock the Gas Mileage Guide, the U.S. Department of Transportation reported today.

Civil penalties of $500 were assessed against each dealer by the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The law provides for penalties as high as $10,000 for each violation.

The safety agency said the fines were relatively light in this first enforcement action because some dealers may not have fully understood their obligation under the Motor Vehicle Information and Cost Savings Act to display the booklet containing fuel-consumption data for current year model vehicles.

The law requires new car dealers to display the mileage guides prominently in their showrooms and to keep an adequate stock on hand to meet public demand.

NHTSA head Joan Claybrook said, "The law makes clear the congressional belief that the most effective way to inform new car buyers of fuel efficiency information is by making comparative data on the different makes and models of cars available at dealer showrooms. Because of the importance of this aspect of our national fuel economy effort, we must make sure the dealers fulfill their obligation to display this information."

The pocket size Gas Mileage Guide contains basic information about new car, station wagon and light truck models and their estimated miles-per-gallon ratings. This information is in tabulated form so that consumers can make easy comparisons.

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Under the Act, the Congress required that the guide be compiled by the Environmental Protection Agency and published and distributed by the Department of Energy. The DOT is authorized to penalize dealers who fail to display the guides in the same location of a showroom that brochures describing their new automobiles also are displayed.

The dealer is responsible for ordering the guides, at no cost, from the Department of Energy, Technical Information Center, P.O. Box 62, Oak Ridge, Tenn., 37830.

Personnel in NHTSA's regional offices are continuing an enforcement program to assure that dealers provide the comparative information to consumers. However, consumers who do not find the guides in a dealer's showroom should notify the Office of Fuel Compliance, NHTSA, 400 Seventh St., SW, Washington, D.C. 20590.

The dealers who were fined include:

LeBert Brothers Lincoln Mercury, Arlington, Mass.; Dick Gidron Cadillac, Inc., Bronx, N.Y.; Paragon Oldsmobile Inc., Flushing, N.Y.; Rossi Buick Inc., Bronx, N.Y.; Len Stoler Chrysler-Plymouth, Baltimore; Hennessey Cadillac Inc., Atlanta; Hub Motor Co., Atlanta; Friendly Chevrolet, Inc., Springfield, Ill.; Landmark Ford, Inc., Springfield, Ill.; Dave Miller Oldsmobile, Inc., Matteson, Ill.; Van Dahm Lincoln-Mercury, Inc., Oak Lawn, Ill.

Also, Pappas Chevrolet Co., Kansas City, Mo.; Randolph Oldsmobile Co., Lincoln, Neb.; Jerry Morris AMC-Jeep, Inc., Littleton, Colo.; Ruwart-Rubenstein Chevrolet, Aurora, Colo.; Ellis Brooks Chevrolet, San Francisco; Fitzpatrick Chevrolet, Concord, Calif.; Raines Chevrolet Co., Sunnyvale, Calif.; Sunnyvale Ford, Sunnyvale, Calif.; Jim Houston Ford, Seattle; and Nelson Chevrolet Co., Inc., Seattle.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Wednesday, November 21, 1979

NHTSA -- 98-79 (PARIS)
Tel. 202-426-9550

DOT LAUNCHES ALL-OUT ATTACK ON DRUNK DRIVING

The U.S. Department of Transportation has developed a program which has been successful in dealing with the problem of drunk driving and is urging officials across the nation to use more of their highway safety funds to attack this problem.

Joan Claybrook, head of the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, at a news conference in Washington, D.C., outlined the program which is based on a coordinated effort by the police, courts, local governments and rehabilitation agencies.

In letters timed to coincide with the start of the Thanksgiving - New Year holiday season, Claybrook called upon nation's governors and 850 mayors and county executives to begin an all-out attack on the problem of drunk driving. She asked that they use all of the resources available to them in this effort.

She released a report which documents the results of 35 Alcohol Safety Action Projects (ASAPs) conducted throughout the country from 1971-1976 which resulted in the development of the coordinated approach to dealing with drunk driving.

Claybrook announced that her agency had produced a public service announcement for television based on the movie "Star Wars," and depicting the theme "Friends Don't Let Friends Drive Drunk," which is being released during the holiday period. She urged the television industry to support the campaign by playing the announcement as much as possible.

She also said that a series of meetings will be held throughout the country in 1980 to familiarize police, judges and health care officials with techniques developed in the ASAP programs. Also, a national conference on community drunk driver control is planned for the fall of 1980.

Claybrook congratulated the governors of 15 states for taking significant steps to address the problem. The states of Virginia, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Tennessee, Colorado, Utah, Idaho, Oregon, Arkansas, Iowa, Minnesota and South Carolina were cited for such activities as statewide comprehensive programs financed through fees, expanded law enforcement training, improved breath testing and accelerated rehabilitation programs.

"About one-half of all fatal highway crashes in this country involve alcohol," Claybrook said. "Drunk driving continues to be one of our most serious public health and safety problems." She cited statistics showing that some 50 percent of all drivers killed have blood alcohol levels in excess of the legal limit.

"In fact," she said, "in single vehicle crashes, where we are more certain who is at fault, upwards of 65 percent of those killed are legally drunk. They not only kill themselves but they take the lives of innocent victims as well."

Claybrook said, "Exercising common sense in the use of alcohol when driving, particularly over the long holiday period, is important if we are to prevent these traditionally festive occasions from turning into tragedy."

The Administrator said the statistics are grim. "Of the estimated 25,000 alcohol-related fatalities annually, about one-third involve the social drinker while the balance involve problem drinkers. And of the persons aged 16-24 involved in alcohol-related crashes, approximately 8,000 die and 40,000 more are disfigured."

The federally funded Alcohol Safety Action Projects (ASAPs) improved the means by which drunk drivers are detected, apprehended, processed through the courts, diagnosed for alcohol dependency and given a combination of education, rehabilitation and penalties.

"The ASAP program has proven that benefits accrue when health and safety agencies work together in a coordinated effort at the community level," Claybrook said. "The findings from this program offer a new basis for renewal of local action to curb the drunk driver.

"We know that there are measures which can be applied right now to reduce drunk driving." In her letters to state and community leaders, she suggested these specific actions:

- o Encourage cities and counties to adopt coordinated programs to deal with the drunk driver.
- o Make the programs financially self-supporting through fines and treatment fees for drunk drivers.
- o Improve drunk driver apprehension techniques and support equipment such as the new roadside breath-alcohol testers.
- o Streamline court procedures to handle increased caseloads.
- o Combine punishment for the drunk driving offense with treatment for the offender's underlying alcohol problem.

Many of these measures were developed, refined and tested in the 35 community projects and the report cites the progress of the states in developing improved drunk driver control programs.

Before the passage of the Highway Safety Act in 1966, few states specified a presumptive level of driving while intoxicated. The federal standard for alcohol safety, developed by DOT, prescribed the 0.10 percent blood level that legally defines drunkeness. Now all the states have laws defining driving under the influence at the 0.10 percent level.

Depending on a person's weight, the risk in driving increases after two drinks. An average 180-pound man reaches 0.10 percent after consuming four normal drinks (about 1/2 ounces of pure alcohol each) within one hour on an empty stomach. A normal drink contains 1 to 1 1/2 ounces of 86 proof whiskey. If drinking occurs after meals, the time taken to reach the danger level is delayed somewhat. Most social drinkers seldom exceed the 0.10 percent blood alcohol concentration level.

NHTSA first focused national attention on the seriousness of the drinking driving problem in a report to Congress in 1968 entitled, Alcohol and Highway Safety, which was authored by Dr. William Haddon, who was then the agency's administrator. Haddon is now President of the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.

The majority of states have made some improvements in their law enforcement, court, rehabilitation and educational efforts . At least five states -- Idaho, Massachusetts, South Carolina, Utah and Virginia -- have either established new taxes on alcoholic beverages or fees charged to driving-while-intoxicated-offenders to pay for expanded drinking driver control programs.

The report cites these other accomplishments:

- In 12 of the 35 test projects, a statistically significant reduction in fatal crashes at night was achieved.
- Individual projects were able to double and even triple "driving while intoxicated" arrests, using such new technology as roadside breath testing.
- Court procedures were streamlined to handle large caseloads.
- Roughly a quarter-of-a-million drinking drivers were referred for treatment.

Claybrook said, however, that greater efforts need to be funneled into alcohol-related programs. NHTSA is preparing a brochure for doctors to give to their patients warning them of the dangers of alcohol abuse and driving after drinking. The American Medical Association, the American Society of Internal Medicine, and the American Academy of Family Physicians are all cooperating in this endeavor.

"Congress is allocating some $175 million to the states for their highway safety programs. I encourage each state to use these federal funds and state money as well to the fullest extent possible to attack the drunk driving problem."

The administrator also called for public education efforts among government agencies and the private sector to educate people of all ages in dealing with the dangers of misusing alcohol.

"Ultimate control of alcohol abuse in connection with driving depends on informed citizens deciding wisely about driving after drinking and being willing to help others who have had too much to drink so they do not get behind the wheel of a car," she said.

Claybrook also released the abstract of a report -- Alcohol and Highway Safety 1978: A Review of the State of Knowledge -- that documents the nature and extent of the alcohol-crash problem, examines programs that have been carried out to deal with this problem, and offers suggestions for future action. This report is now being widely distributed.

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FOR RELEASE THURSDAY
November 28, 1979

NHTSA -- 100-79 (PARIS)
Tel. 202-426-9550

DOT IMPROVES SAFETY IN LIGHT TRUCKS AND VANS

The U. S. Department of Transportation moved today to increase protection in accidents for the drivers and passengers of light trucks and vans.

The department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration issued amendments that extend three federal motor vehicle safety standards to light trucks and vans that will become effective Sept. 1, 1981. This will give manufacturers time to design and produce vehicles with the added protection. The regulations since the late 1960's have applied only to passenger cars.

The three standards involve improving interior padding to protect occupants, improving protection for the driver by providing steering wheels that absorb energy to cushion the driver's impact in the event of an accident, and limiting the distance the steering assembly can move backwards in order to avoid impact with the driver in a crash.

Joan Claybrook, the head of NHTSA, said the rapid growth of light trucks and vans has resulted in a significant increase in fatalities and injuries which now number in excess of 5,000 a year. "The number of vehicles such as pickup trucks, buses and vans has increased about 85 percent over the last decade and light trucks now account for 89 percent of the truck market. Sales of these vehicles passed the three million mark in 1977 and are expected to grow through the 1980's."

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She said that based on an agency evaluation of the effectiveness of the three standards in passenger cars, "We can expect a reduction of several hundred fatalities and over 4,000 serious injuries per year once all light trucks and vans comply with the standards."

The revised standards will require:

-- That instrument panels, seat backs, sun visors and arm rests be designed to lessen injuries when persons are thrown against them in crashes;

-- The steering wheel to cushion the impact which occurs when a driver strikes the steering wheel in an accident; and

-- Limitation of the rearward movement of the steering assembly to no more than five inches, when the vehicle crashes into a barrier at 30 miles per hour.

Standard 201, Occupant Protection in Interior Impact, and Standard 203, Impact Protection for the Driver from the Steering Control System, will apply to trucks, buses and multipurpose passenger vehicles with a gross vehicle weight of 10,000 pounds or less, while Standard 204, Steering Control Rearward Displacement, is being extended to cover trucks, buses and multipurpose vehicles with an unloaded vehicle weight of 4,000 pounds or less.

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FOR RELEASE THURSDAY
December 6, 1979

NHTSA -- 101-79 (Paris)
Tel. 202-426-9550

DOT PROPOSES TO UPGRADE VEHICLE OCCUPANT PROTECTION IN SIDE IMPACT COLLISIONS

The U.S. Department of Transportation is considering a proposal that would require a higher level of protection for the occupants of motor vehicles in side impact collisions.

Addressing one of the agency's top priorities, the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration issued today an advance notice of proposed rulemaking that would upgrade the federal standard on side door strength and extend it to light trucks, vans and multipurpose passenger vehicles.

NHTSA also announced that a public meeting will be held Jan. 31 and Feb. 1 at the Federal Aviation Administration Auditorium, Seventh St. and Independence Ave., SW, Washington, D.C., to allow all interested persons to present oral and written views concerning the proposed upgrading of the standard.

Standard 214, which has applied only to passenger cars since Jan. 1, 1973, specifies crush resistance requirements for side doors of cars under static (laboratory) test conditions. The agency wants to establish more stringent performance criteria for occupant protection under dynamic (in-motion) crash tests.

A NHTSA study evaluating the standard and released last September shows that the existing regulation has substantially reduced fatalities and serious injuries in accidents where one car is involved in a side impact with a tree or other fixed object. The study also shows that when all cars on the road are in compliance with the present standard, it will prevent an estimated 2,800 deaths, 4,000 severe or life-threatening injuries and 3,000 moderate injuries per year. Although the study reports successes in the single car accident, it also shows that improvements are needed to protect occupants in cars involved in side impact crashes with another vehicle.

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"Improving protection for occupants in side impact collisions is one of this agency's highest priorities," NHTSA chief Joan Claybrook said. "More than 34,000 vehicle occupants lose their lives annually in highway crashes with an estimated one-third of these fatalities occurring in side impact crashes."

"The report clearly shows that the existing standard does not solve the problem of side impact crashes involving two vehicles. Our research activities and the research safety vehicle program, as well as new developments by manufacturers, have resulted in promising designs that could be adopted to substantially reduce the harm caused by vehicle-to-vehicle side impact crashes," Claybrook said.

"Generally, these fatalities occur in the more severe side impact collisions at high speeds. Extensive intrusion into the occupant compartment and ejection of occupants often accompany these severe crashes. In fact, at least 28 percent of the occupants that receive life-threatening injuries during side impact accidents are ejected from the vehicle. Therefore, reducing the number of ejections that occur during side impact accidents is one of the primary goals of this proposed rulemaking," Claybrook said.

"Until the standard is upgraded, there are a number of voluntary actions that the manufacturers can take on their own to mitigate the tragic results of side crashes," Claybrook continued. "As a means of reducing the occurrence of ejections, manufacturers might consider using laminated glass in side windows and strengthening door hinges and latches. These things could be done during the design changes that are currently underway."

She noted that research projects are currently underway to generate data that can be used to upgrade the integrity of the occupant compartment, and to find ways to reduce deaths and injuries by changing side door structures and modifying vehicle interiors.

NHTSA scheduled the public meeting to collect and consolidate as much information as possible on this subject, with emphasis on the status of side impact protection technology and vehicle manufacturer experience in developing side impact protection in their models.

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The views and presentations of all interested parties, and in particular those of component suppliers, vehicle manufacturers and researchers, are solicited. The agency wants particularly to discuss:

- o Pertinent side impact collision accident data.
- o Design of a test dummy.
- o Development of a dynamic test procedure using a moving barrier impactor.
- o Development of vehicle improvements for upgrading side impact protection.

Persons who wish to make an oral presentation at the meeting should contact William Brubaker, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 400 Seventh Street, SW, Washington, D.C. 20590 (phone 202-426-2242) before Jan. 14, 1980. Interested parties who want to make written comments should do so by March 5, 1980.

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FOR RELEASE THURSDAY
December 6, 1979

NHTSA 102-79 (Paris)
Tel.No. (202)426-9550

NEW STANDARD FOR IMPROVED PROTECTION OF CHILDREN IN VEHICLE ACCIDENTS

A new standard aimed at improving protection for infants and young children riding in automobiles was announced today by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

The new standard, issued by the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, will apply to all types of child restraints, including car beds, infant carriers and child harnesses. It will take effect on June 1, 1980.

Joan Claybrook, NHTSA administrator, said the new standard sets stricter performance requirements for child restraint equipment and requires firms manufacturing these systems to test the equipment in actual simulated crashes using child test dummies. The existing standard only requires laboratory testing.

"Each year," Claybrook noted, "more than 800 children age five and under are killed and more than 100,000 are injured in motor vehicle crashes. Safety experts estimate that more than half of these deaths and injuries could be prevented by the proper use of child restraints."

"We believe this new standard will effectively upgrade child restraint systems currently being sold in this country, and help eliminate many of the senseless deaths of infants and young children involved in auto accidents," Claybrook said.

She emphasized, however, that these systems do no good unless they are used and used properly.

In an effort to promote the proper use of child restraints through educational programs, NHTSA is sponsoring a national conference on child restraint safety scheduled Dec. 10-12 in Washington, D.C., which will be attended by more than 300 persons from the medical community, consumer and service organizations, juvenile product and auto industries, and state and local highway safety agencies.

Under the new standard, all child restraints will be subject to impact tests simulating 30 mile-per-hour frontal crashes, and will be required to retain the test dummy without losing any of the system's structural integrity. Also, during the test, the systems must meet limitations which have been set on the amount of force which can be exerted on the head and chest of the child test dummy. The seating systems will have to be attached to the vehicle by means of the vehicle's seat belts. A special "tether belt" supplied by the manufacturer will be permitted in addition to the lap belt as a means of attachment.

For restraint systems equipped with these tether belts, an additional frontal test at 20 mph would be required without the tether attached. This additional test, NHTSA said, is intended to assure a minimum level of safety when the tether strap is not used, since statistics indicate that this happens about 50 percent of the time.

Infant car beds, when used, will have to be installed laterally across the vehicle seat, using the available seat belt.

Under the revised standard, direction labels instructing parents on how to use the child restraint system properly must be permanently posted on the system and be visible when the child restraint is in place. In addition, each system must come with an instruction manual that explains proper installation and use of the restraint.

Claybrook said these requirements are aimed at reducing widespread misuse of child restraint systems.

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FOR RELEASE MONDAY, 9 A.M.
December 10, 1979

NHTSA 103-79 (Paris)
Tel. No. (202) 426-9550

DOT OPENS NATIONAL MEETING ON CHILD CAR PASSENGER SAFETY

More than 300 delegates from all sections of the country meet in Washington, D.C. today for the start of a three-day National Conference on Child Passenger Protection, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

The meeting at the Sheraton Washington Hotel, planned by the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, will examine techniques to promote the proper use of child restraints in automobiles, and will address the general subject of child transportation safety.

The conference will focus on:

- o "How to," workshops, with emphasis on an exchange of ideas.
- o Success stories from various states and communities.
- o Vehicle improvements to protect occupants.
- o Designing cars to protect children from hazards.
- o Making restraints easier to use.

In an effort to broaden the agency's knowledge of the hazards vehicles pose to children and to determine possible regulatory and other actions to deal with the problem, the NHTSA also will hold a public meeting Wednesday, Dec. 12. This forum will conclude the three-day meeting and give the public a chance to present its ideas and views on ways to improve protection for children involved in vehicle collisions either as occupants or as pedestrians or cyclists.

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Attending the conference will be representatives of the medical community, consumer and service organizations, juvenile product and auto industries, and federal, state and local agencies.

The meeting is the culmination of year-long activities throughout the nation, including meetings sponsored by organizations at the grass roots level, to explain the urgent need for child restraint systems and to discuss their proper use with parents and other drivers who regularly transport children. Pediatricians, public health specialists and teachers are among those who have contributed to this intensive effort, with the emphasis on educational campaigns and legislative programs.

Speakers will include Congressman Bob Eckhardt, D-Tex.; Jim Guy Tucker, Chairperson, White House Conference on Families; J. Michael McGinnis, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Health at HEW, and Dr. William Haddon, President, Insurance Institute for Highway Safety and the first administrator of the NHTSA.

The second day of the conference will be devoted to workshops dealing with:

- o The public's responsibility in protecting children.
- o The role of the pediatrician in child transportation safety.
- o Accident prevention as a public health measure.
- o Portrayal of passenger safety in television programming and and its influence on attitudes and behavior.
- o Promoting child passenger safety through the mass media.
- o Efforts on the local level by automobile dealers and retailers to promote the sale and proper use of child restraints.

Joan Claybrook, NHTSA Administrator, hailed the conference as an appropriate climax to 1979, the International Year of the Child.

"I think we should renew the spirit behind this special designation," she said. "I can assure you that every year will be the year of the child at NHTSA.

"I can't think of a more worthwhile effort than protecting young lives in traffic accidents. We are particularly impressed by the hundreds of dedicated people all over the country who are sharing their technical information and ideas with this conference in a concerted effort to enhance child passenger safety," Claybrook said.

Claybrook also released a report entitled, "Auto Crashes: The Repercussions for the American Family," an account of interviews with seven traffic victims and how the accidents have changed their lives. Those interviewed talked extensively about the consequences and impact of the accident in such areas as finances, work, recreation, and their families.

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To highlight the need for action, Claybrook said motor vehicle accidents are now the number one killer of children age 14 and under in this country. "Each year, approximately 4,100 children are killed and several hundred thousand are seriously injured in motor vehicle accidents." She noted that 50 percent of the children are killed as occupants of automobiles, 38 percent as pedestrians and 12 percent as cyclists.

"There is ample evidence to show that half of these deaths and injuries could be prevented by proper use of child restraints and seat belts for older children. We have reached the point now where one in every 60 infants born will die some day in a traffic accident and two in three can expect to suffer a vehicle-related injury.

"Since an estimated 93 percent of small children ride in vehicles unrestrained, there is an urgent need for parents to use effective restraints so that their children are fully protected," Claybrook said.

She said parents who accept the need to protect their own children with restraints are generally more likely to use their own belts. "Our latest surveys indicate that safety belt use in this country is only about 14 percent -- a major reason why our annual traffic toll exceeds 50,000 deaths."

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U.S. Department of Transportation
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Office of Assistant Secretary for Governmental and Public Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20590

FOR RELEASE TUESDAY
December 11, 1979

NHTSA 99-79 (AMES)
Tel. No. (202) 426-0670

DOT AUTO DEFECT CASE REPORT FOR JULY-SEPTEMBER 1979

One new defect investigation was opened during the third quarter of 1979 and five were terminated, the U.S. Department of Transportation reports. At the end of the July-September period, 34 safety-related defect investigations were in progress, including five in which an initial determination of defect has been made.

The newly opened investigation involves engine cooling fans on 1973 Dodge, Plymouth and Chrysler passenger cars with 318 CID engines manufactured by the Chrysler Corp. Allegedly, the flexible blades on these fans (called flex-fans) can break and be thrown off in any direction with great velocity. Should this occur with the hood open, persons working on the engine or standing nearby could be seriously injured. In 1977, the Ford Motor Co. recalled 1,213,535 cars for replacement of flex-fans.

Cases in which an initial defect determination has been made include:

- 1971-1973 Mercury Capri vehicles. Allegedly the front seat reclining mechanism fails, allowing the seat to rotate rearwards which could result in the driver losing control of the vehicle. In October, the Ford Motor Co. agreed to recall 152,000 vehicles for correction of this problem.

- 1970-1974 Fiat Model 124 and 850 vehicles. Allegedly these vehicles are subject to extensive and premature rusting and corrosion of the undercarriage, resulting in bending or separation of such structural components as suspension systems, rocker panels, floor pans, and steering components.

- o 1975-1976 Chevrolet and GMC light duty trucks. Allegedly the jacks provided as original equipment with these vehicles fail when used on shoulder inclines, creating a potential for injury.

- o 1971-1972 Mercury Capri vehicles. Allegedly the headlight switch falls apart causing headlights and tailights to cease operation. In September, Ford agreed to recall 92,000 vehicles to replace the headlight switches.

- o 1971-1974 and 1976-1978 Mercury Capri vehicles with floor-mounted gear shift levers. Allegedly the gear shift lever breaks or detaches from the transmission, making it impossible for the driver to shift gears. In October, Ford agreed to recall 273,000 vehicles to correct this problem.

Five cases were terminated during the period as a result of manufacturer recall or because no specific failure pattern could be identified. These included:

- o 1971-1977 General Motors Corp. vehicles equipped with power brakes. This investigation involved alleged brake power booster failure requiring high brake pedal force to stop the vehicle. In 1977, General Motors recalled 2,200,000 of its 1976 models to correct this problem. This case was opened to determine if additional vehicles should be recalled. No evidence of a similar problem was found in other vehicles.

- o 1975-1977 Triumph, TR-7, Spitfire, MGB, MG Midget, and Jaguar XJ6 vehicles manufactured by British Leyland. The investigation centered on allegations that the ignition amplifier in these vehicles was subject to failure, causing vehicles to stall. Investigation revealed that early production units had various ignition problems. Because of ease of access and improper diagnosis, amplifier units were frequently replaced although they were still functional. No single system problem was identified.

- o 1975-1977 Triumph TR 7 vehicles. This investigation was based on allegations that the throttle cable fails, resulting in the accelerator sticking or returning to the idle position. British Leyland Motors, Inc. recalled 20,875 vehicles for correction of this problem.

- o 1977 Porsche 911 vehicles imported by Volkswagen of America, Inc. This investigation involved allegations of engine compartment fires apparently caused by improper air conditioner installation. Investigation revealed that fires resulted from improper installation of after-market air conditioners by non-Volkswagen dealerships. Volkswagon of America, Inc. recalled 2,800 cars for inspection and correction of this problem.

- o 1970-1974 Midget vehicles manufactured by British Leyland. This investigation was based on allegations that the throttle cables in these vehicles may stick and fail to return to the idle position. The investigation failed to establish or suggest a failure pattern in the cable.

For terminated cases, information collected during investigations is available for public viewing in the Technical Reference Division, Room 5108, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 400 Seventh St., SW, Washington, D.C. 20590.

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REPORTING PERIOD JULY, AUGUST, SEPTEMBER 1979

Safety Related Defect Investigatory
Cases Opened This Period

JULY 1979

Case Number: C9-24
Manufacturer: Chrysler Corporation
Make: Dodge, Plymouth, Chrysler
Model: Passenger Cars with 318 CID engines
Year(s): 1973

Possible Problem: Alleged failure of flexible blade engine cooling fan.

BASIS FOR INVESTIGATION

This case was opened July 3, 1979, based on a petition from an attorney who is representing a client who was injured when the flexible blade engine cooling fan failed on his 1973 Dodge Charger.

DESCRIPTION AND FUNCTION

On liquid cooled engines the engine cooling fan is located between the engine and the radiator. During engine operation the fan draws air through the radiator core. This air flow removes heat from the liquid coolant flowing through the radiator, thus providing engine cooling.

ANALYSIS OF THE ALLEGED PROBLEM

Problem Mode: These cooling fans have flexible, metal blades. As engine operating speed (and fan RPM) increases, the blades flex and straighten out (a reduction in pitch) thereby requiring less power for engine operation. Allegedly, the blade material fails due to fatigue, allowing the blade to separate, with pieces of the blade being thrown off in any direction at high speed. This creates the possibility of injury to anyone working on the engine or standing nearby when the engine is running and the hood is open.

Problem Symptoms: There are no preoccurrence warning symptoms.

REPORTING PERIOD JULY, AUGUST, SEPTEMBER 1979

Safety Related Defect Investigatory
Cases Terminated This Period

JULY 1979

Case Number: C7-21
Manufacturer: General Motors Corporation
Make: Chevrolet, Pontiac, Oldsmobile, Buick, Cadillac, and GMC Trucks
Model: Equipped with Power Brakes
Year(s): 1971-1977

Possible Problem: Power brake booster failure requiring high brake pedal force to stop vehicle.

Reason for Termination: Manufacturer recalled 2,200,000 of its 1976 models. This case was opened to determine if additional vehicles should be recalled. No evidence of a similar problem was found in other vehicles.

Case Number: C7-31
Manufacturer: British Leyland
Make: Various
Model: TR-7, Triumph, Spitfire, MGB, MG Midget, Jaguar XJ6
Year(s): 1975-1977

Possible Problem: Ignition amplifier may fail, causing vehicle to stall.

Reason for Termination: This investigation was based on receipt of 67 complaints directly from owners and others forwarded from British Leyland in response to inquiries. Investigation revealed that early production units had various ignition problems. Because of ease of access and improper diagnosis, amplifier units were frequently replaced although they were still functional. No single system problem was identified.

Case Number: C7-32
Manufacturer: British Leyland
Make: Triumph
Model: TR7
Year(s): 1975-1977

Possible Problem: Throttle cable failure. Accelerator sticks or returns to idle.

Reason for Termination: RECALL NO. 77V-143
Involving 20,875 vehicles

AUGUST 1979

Case Number: C7-40
Manufacturer: British Leyland
Make: Midget
Model: Midget
Year(s): 1970-1974

Possible Problem: Throttle cable may stick and fail to return to idle position.

Reason for Termination: Investigation failed to establish or suggest a failure pattern in the cable.

September 1979

Case Number: C8-39
Manufacturer: Volkswagen of America, Inc.
Make: Porsche
Model: 911
Year(s): 1977

Possible Problem: Possibility of engine compartment fires.

Reason for Termination: Investigation revealed that fires resulted from improper installation of after-market air conditioners by non-Volkswagen dealerships. Volkswagen of America, Inc., agreed to inspect all units and correct problems, regardless of the source of the air-conditioning unit. After-market air-conditioner manufacturers improved installation instructions to prevent future recurrence of this problem. RECALL NO. 77V-166 involving 2,800 vehicles.

CURRENT INVESTIGATIONS OF ALLEGED SAFETY RELATED DEFECTS

I. INVESTIGATIONS

Report for
Month Ending: September 30, 1979

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 or equipment 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
C4-17	General Motors	Chevrolet Series C,P,G-10 trucks and GMC Series C,P,G-1500 trucks	1971-72	Steering Tie Rod	Separation of ball from socket with loss of vehicle control
C4-18	Ford	Fairlane and Ranchero Mercury Montego Ford Falcon Mercury Comet	1965-69 1965-69 1965-70 1965-70	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
C4-28	Ford	All Pintos	1971-72	Rack and Pinion steering	Alleged steering difficulty or loss of steering control due to bending of steering assembly due to wheel impacts
C4-53	General Motors	Chevelle	1965-69	Engine Mounts	Alleged engine mounts failure. See C4-18

CURRENT INVESTIGATIONS OF ALLEGED SAFETY RELATED DEFECTS

I. INVESTIGATIONS

Report for
Month Ending: September 30, 1979

CASE NO.	MANUFACTURER/MAKE	MODEL	YEAR	COMPONENT	POSSIBLE PROBLEMS
C6-31	Ford	F-250 and F-350 Series trucks	1972-74	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.
C7-24 (1)	Ford	Ford passenger cars & Light trucks	1970-77	Flex-fan(engine cooling fan)	Fan blade breakage can result in injury to anyone working under hood of vehicle while engine is running
C7-38 (2)	Ford/GM	Pinto, Vega subcompact	1970-76	Gasoline tank	Readily damaged in rear-end collision Possibility of fire or explosion
C8-02	Ford	All 351 or larger engine models	1970-79	C-6 and FMX transmissions	Transmission may jump from park to reverse.
C8-04	Ford	Ford, Mercury Lincoln-Full size and intermediate	1968-74	Idler arm and mounting bracket	Bracket pulls out of frame rail resulting in loss of steering control
C8-08	Kool Klutch	Kool Flex, Imperial	1973-77	Engine cooling fan	Cracking and/or separation of engine cooling fan blades.
C8-20	Ford	Granada/Monarch	1975-77	Power steering control valve	Malfunction of remote centering power steering control valve resulting in steering instability.

INVESTIGATIONS

CURRENT INVESTIGATIONS OF ALLEGED SAFETY RELATED DEFECTS

Report for
Month Ending: September 30, 1979

CASE NO.	MANUFACTURER/MAKE	MODEL	YEAR	COMPONENT	POSSIBLE PROBLEMS
C8-24	Broadwheel Co.	13" - 14" Wheel	All	Boat trailer wheels	Rim detaches from spider due to weld failure causing wheel to separate from trailer.
C8-25	Chrysler	B-300,MB-300,CB-300 MB & CB-400 1-ton	1973-77	Front disc brake	Temporary loss of front brakes due to caliper contact with frame
C8-26	Ford	Trucks, Series B,C F,L,W and DCL	1975-78	Wiring harness anti-lock rear wheel speed sensor to computer module	Failure of wiring due to flexing while in motion may result in reduced braking capability.
C8-27	Ford	Granada & Monarch	1975-77	Fuel line hose	Hose failure may result in engine compartment fires
C8-28	Fiat	X-1/9 & 128	1973-77	Front wheel bearing	Bearing failure may cause loss of control
C8-29	Ford	Pinto, Bobcat	1973-75	Steering Coupling Flange	Failure may result in loss of steering control
C8-33	GM	Buick, Pontiac	1976-77	231 V-6 engine	Alleged stalling in traffic
C9-01	Ford	Vans and F & E Series Light Trucks	1974-77	Steering gear bolt	Alleged steering gear bolt failure with possible loss of steering.
C9-05	Ford	Pantera All models	1971-74	Rear undercarriage	Alleged excessive rust and corrosion of rear undercarriage. Possible collapse of rear suspension and loss of vehicle control

CURRENT INVESTIGATIONS OF ALLEGED SAFETY RELATED DEFECTS

I. INVESTIGATIONS

Report for
Month Ending: September 30, 1979

CASE NO.	MANUFACTURER/MAKE	MODEL	YEAR	COMPONENT	POSSIBLE PROBLEMS
C9-10	VW	Rabbit, Fox Dasher, Scirocco	1974-76	Brake Master Cylinder	Failure of master cylinder results in loss of brakes
C9-11	Ford	Maverick, Comet	1970-73	Fuel tank system	Fuel system intergrity in rear impact collision. May result in fire or explosion.
C9-14	Renault	Le Car & SW	1976-79	Tailgate lock	Latch failure during impact with possible ejection of occupants and objects.
C9-15	Subaru	Station Wagon	1975	Tailgate lock	Same as C9-14
C9-16	Toyota	Corona SW Corolla SW	1973-78	Tailgate lock	Same as C9-14
C9-17	Ford	Pinto SW & H/B Bobcat SW & H/B Mustang II H/B	1971-78 1975-78 1974-78	Tailgate lock	Same as C9-14
C9-18	Mazda	RX3 & SW	1975	Tailgate lock	Same as C9-14
C9-19	Uniroyal	PR5, Zeta PR6 TPC PR6	1975-76	Tire	Failure can result in loss of control
C9-24	Chrysler	Chrysler, Dodge, Plymouth passenger cars with 318 CID engines	1973	Flex-fan (engine cooling fan)	Fan blade breakage can result in injury to anyone working under hood of vehicle while engine is running

CURRENT INVESTIGATIONS OF ALLEGED SAFETY RELATED DEFECTS

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

Report for Month Ending: September 30, 1979

CASE NO.	MANUFACTURER/MAKE	MODEL	YEAR	COMPONENT	POSSIBLE PROBLEMS
C5-26 (3)	Ford (INITIAL DEFECT DETERMINATION MADE 8-10-79)	Mercury Capri	1971-73	Seat failures	Failure in reclining mechanism allowing seat to rotate rearwards and could result in loss of control
C7-30 (1)	Fiat (INITIAL DEFECT DETERMINATION MADE 1-16-79 ON 1970-74 MODELS)	850 and 124	1970-77	Undercarriage	Suspension and undercarriage failure due to corrosion
C7-33	General Motors (INITIAL DEFECT DETERMINATION MADE 8-27-79)	Chevrolet light duty trucks, GMC C10, P10, K10, G20	1975-76	Jack	Jacks may fail when used on shoulder inclines
C7-39	Ford (INITIAL DEFECT DETERMINATION MADE 8-10-79)	Mercury Capri	1971-72	Headlight switch	Switch may fall apart causing headlights and tail lights to cease operation
C8-19	Ford (INITIAL DEFECT DETERMINATION MADE 8-10-79)	Mercury Capri	1971-74 1976-78	Manual floor-mounted gear shift lever	Gear shift lever breaks or detaches from transmission

(1) Manufacturer has recalled some models

(2) Manufacturer has recalled 1.5 million Pintos and Bobcats built during the 1971-76 model year

(3) Manufacturer has agreed to recall

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U.S. Department of Transportation

news:

Office of Assistant Secretary for Governmental and Public Affairs

Washington, D.C. 20590

FOR RELEASE TUESDAY
DECEMBER 11, 1979

NHTSA -104-79 (PARIS)
Tel. 202-426-9550

NHTSA HONORS ORGANIZATIONS FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO CHILD SAFETY

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration announced today awards to organizations and individuals for their contributions to protecting lives of children in auto crashes.

Five Awards for Public Service and three Certificates of Appreciation were presented by Joan Claybrook, administrator of the NHTSA, at a luncheon ceremony of the National Conference on Child Passenger Protection.

More than 300 delegates from all sections of the country are attending the conference at the Sheraton Washington Hotel examining ways to promote the proper use of child restraints in automobiles and to exchange ideas on child transportation safety.

A special Award for Public Service was presented on Capitol Hill to Sen. Warren G. Magnuson, D-Wash., for his years of dedicated service in the field of highway safety.

Magnuson, who was unable to attend the conference was cited "for his consistent record of demonstrated concern for the safety of individual motorists and in recognition of his many years of outstanding leadership in the U.S. Senate on behalf of critical highway and auto safety programs."

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Those honored today include:

AWARDS FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

LEAGUE OF GENERAL INSURANCE CO. -- For its efforts to reduce motor vehicle deaths and injuries to children, through its model child restraint distribution program.

INSURANCE INSTITUTE FOR HIGHWAY SAFETY -- For the development of its powerful film entitled "Children and Infants in Car Crashes: Restrained and Unrestrained," which has had a significant impact in promoting the importance of child passenger protection.

MICHIGAN MOTOR VEHICLE OCCUPANT PROTECTION PROGRAM -- For its development of a model state program to promote child passenger protection, including innovative educational techniques and materials.

PHYSICIANS FOR AUTOMOTIVE SAFETY -- For its pioneering efforts and continuing work over the years to bring the need for protection of children in automobiles to the attention of the medical community and to the public.

ACTION FOR CHILD TRANSPORTATION SAFETY -- For its efforts to insure the safety of child auto passengers through the dissemination of consumer information and the promotion of community action programs around the country.

CERTIFICATES OF APPRECIATION

C. ERNEST COONEY, WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION -- In recognition of his efforts to assure the safe transportation of physically handicapped children, and to prevent disabling injuries to all child auto passengers.

HIGHWAY SAFETY RESEARCH CENTER, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA -- In appreciation for its 1979 series of child restraint workshops conducted for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, which stimulated community leaders across the country to establish child passenger protection programs.

SUTLIFF CHEVROLET, HARRISBURG, PA., -- In apprecation of its support in the development and operation of the Kids in Safety Seats (KISS) program in south-central Pennsylvania through its publicity efforts and contribution of child restraint systems for use in the Loan-A-Seat program.

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U.S. Department of Transportation
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NHTSA 105-79 (PARIS)
Tel.No. (202) 426-9550

DOT SEEKS TO REDUCE DISCOMFORT FACTOR IN SAFETY BELT USAGE

In an effort to raise the current low rate of safety belt use, the U.S. Department of Transportation today proposed requirements designed to improve the comfort and convenience of safety belts installed in new vehicles.

The proposal, prepared by the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, would be effective Sept. 1, 1981. It would apply to manual lap belts and automatic belts installed in cars, and to manual belts installed in light trucks and vans weighing less than 10,000 pounds.

The agency's proposal addresses these aspects of seat belt design:

- Uncomfortable shoulder belt fit
- Excessive shoulder belt pressure
- Inconvenient operation of motorized automatic belts
- Inconsistent shoulder and lap belt retraction
- Inaccessible latch plates

Also proposed is a modification of the warning system (visible and audible reminders) requirements for both manual and automatic belts to increase the current rate of manual belt use and to warn front seat occupants when automatic belts have been disconnected.

The proposed standard would not apply to manual lap and shoulder combination belts installed in the front seats of passenger cars, since these systems will start to be phased out in passenger cars when the automatic restraint requirements (air bags or automatic belts) become effective beginning with the 1982 model year cars.

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Joan Claybrook, head of the NHTSA, said, "In spite of the clearly established value of safety belts in reducing deaths and injuries, the rate of belt use in the United States has not been encouraging. In fact, only 14 percent of the American drivers currently use seat belts."

"A large number of research projects point conclusively to the fact that comfort and convenience play an important role in affecting belt usage," she said. "The most effective and constructive approach to this problem would seem to combine information programs aimed at increasing the motoring public's motivation to use restraints, with actions that would make using a seat belt a less difficult task."

Claybrook said the motoring public "is entitled to belt restraints that are free of the discomfort and inconvenience problems found in past systems and continue to be present in the newest seat belt systems. "

"The agency has tentatively determined that the requirements proposed are a reasonable first step toward significant improvement over current seat belt designs," Claybrook added.

NHTSA said survey after survey on the subject of what drivers don't like about belts have brought responses such as "uncomfortable," and "inconvenient."

Many belts, motorists complain, are difficult to reach, do not fit properly, cross the occupant's neck, apply too much pressure, are difficult to buckle and become too tight.

Interested persons are invited to comment on the proposal. Comments should be submitted to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Docket Section, Room 5108, 400 Seventh St., SW, Washington, D.C. 20590.

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ADVANCE FOR RELEASE
Sunday, December 30, 1979

NHTSA 108-79 (AMES)
Tel.No. (202)-426-0670

NINE MILLION VEHICLES RECALLED IN 1979

Almost nine million vehicles and more than 250,000 tires were recalled for safety defects in 1979, the U.S. Department of Transportation announced today.

The figures, compiled by the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, represent recall campaigns through mid-December. In 1978, recalls totaled slightly more than nine million vehicles.

In 1979, domestic manufacturers recalled seven million vehicles in 205 recall campaigns. Foreign manufacturers recalled 1.8 million vehicles in 54 campaigns, bringing the yearly recall total to 8.8 million cars, trucks, buses, recreational vehicles, motorcycles and mopeds. The federal safety agency reported that 52 of these recall campaigns involving approximately 3.7 million vehicles were influenced by government actions or investigations.

The four major U.S. automakers recalled 6.2 million of the 1979 total. General Motors recalled 4.8 million vehicles; Ford Motor nearly 1.2 million; Chrysler more than 225,000; and American motors 29,000.

Most of the foreign vehicle recalls involved Volkswagen of America with almost 542,000 vehicles. Nissan Corp. of America (Datsun) recalled almost 296,000; American Honda over 149,000; and Volvo of America an estimated 240,000 vehicles.

The largest single vehicle recall in 1979 was conducted by General Motors and involved almost 1.9 million 1978 Chevrolet, Pontiac, Oldsmobile, Buick and GMC Caballero vehicles to fix a wheel bearing problem which could result in loss of vehicle control. General Motors also called in over 1.3 million 1979 Chevrolet, Pontiac, Oldsmobile, Buick and Cadillac cars because the heads of the seat belt anchor bolts could break off.

-more-

Ford recalled 152,000 model year 1971-1973 Mercury Capri vehicles to correct a defect involving the front seat reclining mechanism, 92,000 model year 1971-1972 Capris to replace headlight switches which could fall apart, and 273,000 model year 1971-1974 and 1976-1978 Capris with floor-mounted gear shift levers which could break or detach from the transmission while the vehicle was being operated. All three of these recalls resulted from NHTSA investigations.

The largest recalls of foreign vehicles involved:

- o 540,000 Volkswagen Rabbit and Scirocco vehicles with standard transmissions built during the model years 1975-1978 to correct a problem which could result in the vehicles starting and moving by themselves;

- o 296,000 Datsun 1975-1979 models because of a fuel system problem;

- o 132,000 Honda Civic 1200 models built during the model years 1975-1977 because of an exhaust system problem that could result in a vehicle fire;

- o 121,000 Volvo 1974 and 1975 models to correct a fuel tank leakage problem.

Rolls-Royce Motors recalled 193 of its 1979 Rolls Royce and Bentley cars to correct a defect involving the rear seat belts.

In addition to the vehicle and tire recalls, 1,975,000 units of motor vehicle equipment such as jacks, motorcycle luggage racks and fuel filters also were recalled under NHTSA regulations.

Since September 1966, when the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1966 became effective, vehicle manufacturers have recalled almost 83.7 million vehicles in 2,926 recall campaigns. Domestic manufacturers recalled 70.2 million of these vehicles and foreign manufacturers accounted for the remaining 13.5 million. The NHTSA directly influenced the recall of more than half of these vehicles, or 48.8 million.

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