

STATUS REPORT**FEDERAL ROLE
IN
TRAFFIC SAFETY****INSURANCE INSTITUTE for HIGHWAY SAFETY**Watergate Office Building
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HADDON RESIGNS AS CHIEF OF SAFETY BUREAU

Dr. William Haddon, Jr., resigned as Director of the National Highway Safety Bureau effective at the end of the day February 14.

A memorandum circulated by Dr. Haddon to his entire staff the morning of February 14 thanked them for their "many personal sacrifices" and for their contribution during his 29-month tenure as first head of the federal safety bureau.

"Despite the many constraints on our activity, we have all accomplished a great deal in the public interest and have made well the foundations on which far greater transportation safety for all Americans may be assured in the years to come," the memo stated.

A spokesman for the Department of Transportation said Dr. Haddon, 42, had not been asked to resign. It is, however, a matter of protocol for all presidentially appointed office holders routinely to submit their resignations when a new President takes office.

Because of the strong beginning Dr. Haddon had made in bringing structure, discipline, and analytical problem-solving to the largely chaotic highway safety field, and particularly because of his accomplishments in the vehicle safety field, there was strong support for him to remain in his position even under the Nixon Administration. The job of safety director is not an easy one to fill because of the balance that must be struck between professional know-how, administrative ability, and political sophistication.

It was rumored that President Nixon would announce a successor to Dr. Haddon within a short period of time, perhaps hours. It was also expected that the White House would announce a successor to Lowell Bridwell as Administrator of the Federal Highway Administration. The FHWA Administrator is the immediate superior of the NHSB Director in the federal bureaucracy.

There was no announcement about the future plans of Dr. Haddon, who has had a distinguished career in various public health and safety endeavors.

BUREAU TO LET 48 RESEARCH CONTRACTS

The National Highway Safety Bureau plans to let 48 highway safety research contracts before the fiscal year ends June 30. Contracts yet to be awarded will claim the bulk of \$21.2 million in research funds set aside in the current budget to learn more about all phases of the highway crash complex.

The Federal Highway Administration, in behalf of the NHSB, recently sent letters to past and prospective contractors and published a notice in Commerce Business Daily outlining the contemplated research program. Prospective bidders have been asked to submit their qualifications and their areas of interest so the FHWA can develop more complete files on the reservoir of research talent available.

Only a few formal "requests for proposal" have been issued in connection with the published list, but activity is expected to pick up quickly.

While the published list actually contains 51 project descriptions, Bureau officials report there are funds available this year for only 48. Delays may necessitate carrying some of the 48 forward as well, but that is not part of present planning.

Included in the information potential contractors have been asked to supply is "the total number of employees and professional qualifications of scientists, engineers, and technical personnel; a description of general and special facilities; a brief summary of previous relevant work; a statement regarding industrial security clearance, if previously granted; and other available descriptive literature."

Some of the research the Bureau plans to undertake will "follow on" work already begun or be aimed at improving existing vehicle and highway safety standards. In other cases, entire new areas of endeavor will be examined. Among the projects described are those:

-- To study means for reducing accident injuries and fatalities by providing prompt communications from wrecked vehicles at accident sites to a central location. These signals must be comprehensible as specific requests for police, ambulance, or other rescue services and must specify location.

-- To develop, fabricate, and test bumpers and heavy vehicle under-ride guard configurations to provide required data for the preparation of standards.

-- To develop criteria for the forward, lateral, and rearward direct field of view for multipurpose passenger vehicles, trucks and buses. Visual requirements to be determined through human factors analysis.

-- To review and analyze all the significant facets and problems associated with vehicle defog and defrost systems with the intent of establishing full vehicle performance requirements and developing test procedures.

-- To study driver alertness under conditions encountered during long periods of highway driving to determine factors leading to diminished alertness. To recommend techniques for maintaining a high level of driver alertness.

-- To obtain anthropomorphic measurements required to build a data base which will assist in developing safety standards for motorcycle construction.

-- To determine human tolerance to impact with vehicle door structures during collision.

-- To confirm, through lot size production sampling tests, that the manufactured vehicle and its subsystems meet federal standards and will perform safely during the expected life span.

-- To develop a quick reaction capability to investigate consumer suspected or experienced potential safety related defects or faults, not presently covered by federal standards.

-- To produce a timely evaluation and appraisal of the comments received by the NHTSB in response to the initial step in specifying used car safety standards.

-- To integrate the results of research on the significance and cause of motor vehicle system and component degradation to quantify the criticality of motor vehicle systems in maintaining a particular level of safety.

-- To continue to determine the nature and safety adequacy of general as well as warranty repairs for an appropriate sample of motor vehicle dealerships and other garage facilities.

-- To develop techniques and prototype equipment to evaluate the condition of passenger car braking systems without disassembling the system.

-- To determine if the current state of public opinion warrants conducting a program of public education in support of periodic vehicle inspection. To recommend a detailed program if it appears warranted.

-- To determine if mobile vehicle inspection facilities can be effectively and economically used. To determine what equipment would constitute such a facility, and to develop a plan for field testing such a unit.

-- To determine the feasibility and practicability of using "diagnostic centers" for state motor vehicle inspection.

-- To develop and validate evaluation instruments for testing driver during the licensing process; to study alternatives to current examination plans and facilities.

-- To validate driver education program evaluation instruments and to develop curricula for various categories of instructors and supervisor

-- To determine the factors relating to pedestrian motivation and behavior, driver action and vehicle operation that result in collisions.

-- To design criteria and other analytical tools for measuring the effectiveness of highway safety public education campaigns and messages in reducing crashes or crash losses.

-- To develop a model motor vehicle registration and titling system.

-- To develop and test a course for ambulance drivers and attendants who already have received short term training.

-- To develop and test new signing systems using graphics, sign shape and color to communicate more effectively with the motorist.

-- To further develop the NHTSB thesaurus to assure cross-talk and compatibility with other information centers.

-- To analyze the total traffic law system, including the pattern of laws and of enforcement mechanisms, as well as behavioral response and attitudes, from the point of view of crash loss reduction.

-- To assist in determining vehicle defect trends by make, model, and year of manufacture of vehicle and to assist in evaluating and improving used car and vehicle inspection standards.

-- To develop and begin to implement procedures for a continuing stratified sample of non-fatal accidents.

-- To develop suitable criteria for defining exposure to accident and injury and to develop methods for the measurement of exposure.

NHSB DEFENDS MOTOR VEHICLE INSPECTION

The National Highway Safety Bureau has again risen in defense of a motor vehicle safety program under attack -- this time in the State of Oklahoma.

Last year, Dr. William Haddon, Jr., Director of the NHSB, warned Kentucky that a contemplated repeal of that state's MVI law would jeopardize its share of federal highway safety and construction funds. In spite of the threat, the Kentucky Legislature passed a repeal bill. The Kentucky governor, however, vetoed the measure and the inspection law remained on the books, although it was subsequently modified through administrative action.

Now, a similar situation has arisen in Oklahoma. The Legislature has suspended application of a new inspection law until March 1 and there is strong sentiment to repeal the law outright. Legislators are said to feel the inspection requirements are too rigid and that Oklahomans were being "gouged" during the very short time the program was in effect.

Dr. Haddon, although much of his leverage is gone because of his "lame duck" status, issued the same warning to Oklahoma that he issued to Kentucky. In a telegram to a state official he said he would recommend that the penalty provision in the Highway Safety Act be invoked (although this could not occur as it relates to highway construction money before December 31). He added that three alternatives being considered would "dilute or make less effective an ongoing highway safety program" and were therefore "unacceptable" in the eyes of the Bureau.

Oklahoma Governor Dewey Bartlett met with Transportation Secretary John Volpe on the controversy on February 7 and it appeared a compromise was in the making -- the Oklahoma Legislature willing -- that would keep the program in effect but reduce the requirements.

The Oklahoma and Kentucky situations are not necessarily unique. Bills have been introduced in at least four other states to repeal or alter MVI programs and the task of the NHSB in stemming the tide of dissent is not easy.

While safety officials believe a good case can be built for the efficacy of motor vehicle inspection, there is no doubt that there is a considerable amount of negative public opinion about the program. Recent publicity out of Washington about the poor quality of auto repair work and a nationwide shortage of auto mechanics hardly redounds to the benefit of the program.

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GORE BILL -- Sen. Albert Gore (D-Tenn.) has introduced a bill to enlarge the Interstate Highway System by 25,000 miles and to correct deficiencies in the 27,000 miles already open to traffic. Senator Gore said recently "an interstate highway subjected to traffic volume beyond its design capacity is perhaps even more dangerous than a nonlimited access highway where traffic moves at slower speeds." To rectify deficiencies created by under-estimates or by design error, the Tennessee senator would authorize the apportionment of \$500 million in new funds "for the specific purpose of upgrading segments where the need is apparent."

MINI-BIKE RULING -- The Federal Highway Administration has ruled that a manufacturer's advertising that a vehicle is "designed for private property or backyard usage" does not constitute grounds for exempting it from compliance with vehicle safety standards. An interpretation was asked by the American Honda Motor Company for its recreational motor-driven "mini-bikes." The company's advertising stresses the bikes are not intended for use on streets and highways. The FHWA says the very fact that they can be used there requires them to meet standards applicable to motorcycles.

NEW STANDARD -- Issues of the February 7, 8 and 11 Federal Register carried announcements about changes in vehicle safety standards related to front end lighting on passenger cars, trucks and buses, tire and rim requirements for passenger cars, and information that will be made available to consumers on the flammability of vehicle interiors.

FTC WARRANTY HEARINGS -- The Federal Trade Commission has concluded public hearings on the functioning of the new car warranty system. Commissioner Chairman Paul Rand Dixon said the testimony taken during the intermittent, month-long examination indicated reforms were needed and the FTC was "certainly going to do something about it." Some of the witnesses who appeared in the latest go-round were those representing the Auto Body Association of America, the Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America, the American Trial Lawyers Association, General Motors Corporation, and various academic institutions. A General Motors spokesman took strong issue with a report by the FTC staff as depicting service to be a "necessary evil" in much of the automobile business. Several witnesses criticized the functioning of the warranty system, maintaining car owners do not get the level of service that they are led to expect.

NIXON NOMINATIONS -- President Nixon has announced the nomination of three men to provide top level support for Secretary of Transportation John A. Volpe. James M. Beggs, 43, Associate Administrator for the Office of Advanced Research and Technology at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Washington D.C., will become Under Secretary of Transportation and the No. 2 man in the department. Dr. Paul Cherington, 50, Professor of Transportation at the Harvard Business School, will become Assistant Secretary for Policy and International Affairs. James D'Orma Braman, 67, Mayor of Seattle, Washington, since 1964, will be Assistant Secretary for Urban Systems and Environment.

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