

**INSURANCE INSTITUTE for HIGHWAY SAFETY**

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**SAFETY DOLDRUMS ENDING? VOLPE PICKS NHSB CHIEF . . .**

A newly named consultant to the Secretary of Transportation is slated, if all goes well, to become the next director of the National Highway Safety Bureau.

Word has been passed by Transportation Secretary John Volpe that Douglas W. Toms, director of the Department of Motor Vehicles for the State of Washington, is aboard at the Transportation Department for 60 days as a consultant, and is reporting directly to the Secretary. Secretary Volpe has made no secret of his intention to ask that Mr. Toms be nominated to the Presidentially-appointed directorship at the end of the 60-day period -- mid-November -- or sooner.

There has been speculation that the highly regarded Washingtonian wanted a first-hand look at the NHSB's operation, including its relationship to the Federal Highway Administration and the Secretary, before it was decided whether he was the man for the directorship. The future status of the Bureau recently has been a source of disagreement within government circles. The Presidentially-appointed Highway Safety Advisory Committee recommended in May that NHSB be removed from the Highway Administration and placed directly under the Secretary, but a more recent internal DOT staff report has urged that the Bureau be further subordinated to the Highway Administration.

The NHSB directorship has been unfilled since February 14, when Dr. William Haddon, Jr., first man to hold the post, stepped out of it after 29 months' service. Dr. Haddon is now president of the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, and Dr. Robert Brenner, NHSB deputy director, has been acting director of the Bureau in the interim. The post is the last high-level Presidential appointment involving national health problems to remain vacant in the Nixon Administration.

If appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate, Mr. Toms will become responsible for the Bureau and its three major operating arms -- the Motor Vehicle Safety Performance Service, which is concerned primarily with vehicle safety standards

development; the Highway Safety Programs Service, which administers state-local safety assistance programs, and the National Highway Safety Institute, which oversees NHSB's research activities. Under present DOT procedures Mr. Toms, along with the directors of the Bureau of Public Roads and the Bureau of Motor Carrier Safety, would report to Federal Highway Administrator Francis C. Turner.

Mr. Toms' biography appears in the box below.

**. . . AND NIXON MAY NAME SAFETY TASK FORCE**

President Nixon may shortly announce the formation of a special task force to examine current highway safety problems and recommend Presidential or legislative action to resolve them.

Although no official announcement has been made, persistent reports of the plan are circulating in Washington. They indicate that the task force would be made up of predominantly private-sector representatives working under the chairmanship of Frank M. Kreml, vice president for planning and development at Northwestern University and a long-time highway safety activist.

It is not known whether the planned task force would have special responsibility for recommending and advancing a national attack on problems of abusive alcohol use by drivers. The White House has for some weeks been considering alternative ways to develop such an

**DOUGLAS WILLIAM TOMS**

Mr. Toms was born in Melvindale, Mich. on Sept. 17, 1930. He received a B. S. degree in economics from Central Michigan University in 1957, and an M. A. degree in Traffic Administration from Michigan State University in 1958. Between 1949 and 1958 he taught in public schools in Eaton County, Mt. Pleasant, and Okemos, Mich. He was an instructor at Michigan State University from 1957 to 1959, a professor at California State College, Los Angeles, from 1960 to 1964, and owner of Carnahan & Toms, Traffic Analysts, Los Angeles from 1962 to 1965.

He has been Director of Motor Vehicles for the State of Washington at Olympia since 1965. He is managing editor of CALDEA (driver education publication) published at Anaheim, Calif., and is a member of the National Advisory Council on Winter Driving and the National Ski Patrol System. He was the recipient of the Auto Industries Highway Safety Committee Award for 1957-58. Mr. Toms is also a member of the American Driver and Traffic Safety Association, the National Safety Council, the American Personnel and Guidance Association, Phi Kappa Phi, Phi Delta Kappa, Kappa Delta Pi, and the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators, of which he is scheduled to become president this month.

effort. It reportedly feels this is particularly urgent in light of findings, made public in the Department of Transportation's 1968 Report to Congress on Alcohol and Highway Safety, that roughly half of all highway fatalities stem from crashes involving the abusive use of alcohol.

How the new task would relate to two existing, Presidentially-named highway safety advisory groups has not been learned. The Motor Vehicle Safety Advisory Council, created by the Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1966, is charged with advising the Transportation Secretary on vehicle safety matters, and the Highway Safety Advisory Committee, established by the Highway Safety Act of 1966, has the same responsibility concerning programs to assist state-local highway safety efforts.

### HOUSE PASSES VEHICLE SAFETY AUTHORIZATIONS

Long overdue legislation to provide funding authority for the National Highway Safety Bureau's motor vehicle safety standards and research work during this and future years now has passed the House.

Tacked on to the authorizations bill, which has been under House committee consideration for some months, were a number of substantive changes in the Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1966.

The House-passed bill, which will be considered by the Senate Commerce Committee in early October, provides the following:

-- Spending ceilings of \$23 million for Bureau vehicle and tire safety activities, including research, in the current fiscal year, and ceilings of \$35 million each in fiscal years 1971 and 1972. Actual funds for the programs are approved by Congressional appropriations committees after authorizations are granted.

-- A requirement that information developed by the Bureau to assist the prospective vehicle buyer in comparing the safety performance of various makes and models be made available to the buyer prior to a purchase. The law now says only that the information must be provided "at time of" purchase.

-- Authority for the Bureau to set performance standards for motorcycle crash helmets. The Bureau now may -- and does -- require that states enact laws requiring cyclists to wear helmets, but it has no authority to set standards for the helmets themselves.

-- A requirement that manufacturers of new and retread tires, as well as motor vehicles, keep records of the names and addresses of first purchasers of their products, for use in safety defect notification announcements. Tire manufacturers do not now keep such records.

-- A directive that the Secretary of Transportation establish, within one year of final enactment of the bill, limits on the age and condition of tire carcasses suitable for retreading. An earlier committee amendment would have flatly prohibited sale after

July 31, 1971, of "any retreaded tire of less than eight plies if the carcass of such tire was manufactured before August 1, 1968."

-- A prohibition against DOT's expenditure of more than \$100,000 for planning or design of NHTSB research and test facilities without prior consent from the House and Senate commerce committees and public works committees. Construction of such a facility was envisioned by the Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1966, and nearly \$2 million has been appropriated in past sessions of Congress toward this goal.

-- Authority for the Transportation Secretary to submit to Congress, "no later than April 1, 1970, a report on the extent, causes, and means of prevention of agricultural tractor accidents on both public roads and farms." The author of this amendment, Representative Neal Smith (D-Iowa), told the House that "agricultural tractor accidents remain about twice as high as automobile accidents for the miles traveled," and pointed out that DOT now has no authority over the problem.

### STATE PROGRAM ASSESSMENTS INSPECTED

Close scrutiny of National Highway Safety Bureau evaluations of state highway safety program descriptions submitted earlier this year reveals that Bureau evaluators found many deficiencies even in "provisionally approved" programs.

Permission to inspect the Bureau evaluations was granted last month after the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, Booth Newspapers, and the National Safety Council requested access to the material under the Freedom of Information Act.

The program descriptions were submitted to the Bureau for evaluation much earlier this year, and therefore do not necessarily reflect the current level of adequacy for each state's program. On the basis of updated state program submissions, DOT Secretary John Volpe must decide in December whether any state's program is so inadequate that the state should be penalized by losing a share of its federal-aid highway funds starting January 1, 1970.

Status Report examined the evaluations submitted early this year by the fifty states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia. Of these, forty-four were given "provisional approval" despite numerous shortcomings. Five states -- Alabama, Kentucky, Montana, Tennessee and Texas -- were refused provisional approval, and decisions on three -- Maryland, Oklahoma and Washington -- were held in abeyance pending further information.

Although the particulars of the evaluations differed from state to state, discernible common denominators ran throughout many of them. These included urgings that states upgrade their compliance with many of the national highway safety program standards, and that they be more detailed and less qualified in describing timetables for planned compliance with the standards.

"The program submitted is vague in detail . . . report submitted is not responsive in most standards . . . lack of coordination among department heads . . . need for development of a comprehensive plan . . . need for involvement of local political subdivisions," were phrases common to many of the DOT evaluations.

### DELAY IN SIZE-WEIGHT BILL'S START-UP ASKED

Federal Highway Administrator Francis Turner has suggested that the effective date of any legislation authorizing size-weight increases in trucks and buses be delayed for three years -- thus giving the Federal Highway Administration time enough to enact "appropriate safety standards."

Appearing before hearings of the Roads Subcommittee of the House Public Works Committee on proposed legislation to allow increases in the dimensions of trucks and buses operating on interstate highways, Mr. Turner said, "Such a delay would have an additional safety advantage because, in the interim period, there will be an increase in the percentage of our highway network that has been completed to modern design standards. We think that the delay in effective date would be a means of insuring that the vehicle, the road and the load are more nearly consistent with one another . . ."

Mr. Turner also referred to the National Highway Safety Bureau's current development of "a broad array of new safety performance standards for trucks and buses." The following safety standards affecting commercial carriers, he said, are expected to become effective by 1971:

- Brake system performance standards to increase significantly the braking capability of heavy trucks and buses.
- Consumer information regulations requiring manufacturers to publicize the acceleration performance of trucks and buses under varying load conditions.
- Safety standards for truck tires requiring performance characteristics similar to those already in effect for automobile tires.
- Performance standards for rear override guards on trucks.

"Our greatest concern for the effect of increased truck weights results from the fact that there are many bridges in the nation on which no accurate data are available as to the bridge structural capacity rating," Mr. Turner said. The Bureau of Public Roads is just completing a manual which will allow the uniform procedures for making inventories and ratings of bridges, he said.

Mr. Turner said that, "Safety is the first concern of the Department of Transportation." He concluded in his testimony that the Federal Highway Administration does "not have sufficiently reliable evidence to make a clear case for or against the (increased truck size-weight) proposals on safety grounds." Earlier in the summer, DOT had asked for and received a delay in Mr. Turner's appearance so that it could undertake a study of the probable safety impact of expanded truck sizes and weights.

### DOT RELEASES S. T. A. T. E. S. CRASH STUDY

The results of a two-part independent study on (1) the effectiveness of the S. T. A. T. E. S. program and (2) the adequacy of highway crash coverage by news media have been released

by the Federal Highway Administration. The study, done under contract by Dudley-Anderson-Yutzy (D-A-Y), a public affairs consulting firm, analyzed the "efforts of private organizations, state governments and the Federal Highway Administration to inform the public and to persuade the public to support legislation and administrative actions necessary to make American highways safer."

"Safety Through Action To Enlist Support" (S. T. A. T. E. S. ) is a confederation of 25 private organizations, created in 1968 "in the interest of mobilizing public support for essential legislation covering (federal) highway safety standards in the legislature of each state," according to the D-A-Y study.

During the period February-May 1969, D-A-Y surveyed the "environment" affecting highway safety legislation on federal safety standards. Six states -- Texas, Florida, Tennessee, Wisconsin, Illinois and California -- received intensive study, while another 20 states received less intensive review.

"Organized public support efforts by safety organizations had little discernible effect on the course of highway safety standard legislation" in many states, D-A-Y concluded on the basis of these reviews.

"S. T. A. T. E. S. is imperfect, but despite its imperfections it shows impressive promise, at the national level, but less promise, without extensive change, at the state capital," according to the study.

The safety study cautioned that S. T. A. T. E. S. should not "be a particular target of criticism for failure to mount a cohesive support effort." In many states, it found, highway safety had a "relatively low priority as a whole within the Governor's legislative goals," and those in charge of state highway safety activities, as well as their outside supporters, had to work within this framework.

S. T. A. T. E. S. achieved "discernible visibility," according to the report, in nine of the 26 states surveyed: California, Florida, Illinois, Kansas, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey and Wisconsin.

In its evaluation of S. T. A. T. E. S.' needs, D-A-Y recommended that a central executive authority be appointed for the coalition on a full-time basis, and that a full-scale "self-identification" campaign be undertaken to bring about commitment of resource by all participating organizations to specific state legislative action goals. It also recommended a closer working relationship between S. T. A. T. E. S. and the Federal Highway Administration.

In the area of crash reporting, D-A-Y noted that, "Highway safety has suffered from the quality of crash reporting -- and has contributed to it."

It said questionnaires, interviews and examination of 250 media outlets' crash coverage techniques and attitudes revealed:

-- "A low level of professional assignment by media" to crash stories;

-- "A lack of appreciation by information sources (police, hospitals, insurance investigators, etc.)" of the need to improve crash coverage;

-- "Little recognition of the problem, or initiative, by the private safety community or the Federal Highway Administration. "

Among D-A-Y's recommendations was the creation of a crash coverage manual for media, stressing in-depth reporting. ". . . the National Motor Vehicle Safety Advisory Council, the National Highway Safety Advisory Committee and the Federal Highway Administration should find crash coverage guidelines and their implementation a healthy\*step forward in leadership of a cooperative private/public effort to improve substantially the whole climate of public response and support for highway safety, " the report concludes.

### DETROIT CONCERNED BY "AIR BAG" DATE

Two days of testimony on the Federal Highway Administration's tentative plan to require inflatable occupant restraint ("air bag") systems on vehicles made after January 1, 1972, has brought forth from the automobile industry a torrent of technical and legal problems it purportedly would face if forced to meet this deadline.

The taking of testimony was the second step, following initial publication of the proposed standard, in the preliminary rulemaking process.

The "air bag" system contains a device which, sensing a crash, releases either a stored gas or explosive propellant gas or both which inflates a large bag in front of the vehicle occupant to absorb his deceleration. Industry's primary objections concerning reliability of the system center on whether it would function properly when it should -- in a crash -- and would not fire when it should not. Industry spokesmen raised questions of reliability including whether the device would sense crashes only at proper force levels, and whether deployment itself could be injurious, such as through damage to the ears from the bag's explosive sound.

During its testimony, the National Highway Safety Bureau said it was convinced the "air bag" was the most promising passive restraint system so far developed. Robert Carter, NHTSB task force leader, said tests show the system not only promises to make 60-mile-per-hour, head-on crashes survivable, but that its reliability appears to be "phenomenally high. "

Carter said reliability tests, including over two million vehicle miles under varied driving conditions, produced no inadvertent firings. Further, he said, tests with 40 human volunteers showed that the slap of inflating bags produced no injuries other than a few abrasions and "one bloody nose. " He said hearing tests demonstrated that not only did the explosive bag inflation produce no permanent hearing damage, but that subjects could usually hear conversation in normal tones immediately after bag inflation.

Generally, industry's position was that more time was needed for development than the proposed rule permitted, and that more on-the-road testing of the system was required. Chrysler Corporation asked that test procedures be standardized.

At the end of the hearing, Dr. Robert Brenner, acting director of the National Highway Safety Bureau, stressed that the proposed 1972 effective date was only tentative. Other Bureau representatives noted the proposed standard was at a stage where "not only are our options open, they haven't even been selected yet." They added that a key purpose of the testimony was to seek performance criteria and identify problem areas at an early date.

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**CORRECTION: HIGHWAY SAFETY MANUAL PRICES** -- On page four of Status Report #83, dated August 13, under "Highway Safety Program Guides Available," two price corrections should be noted:

1 -- Periodic Motor Vehicle Inspection	\$ 3.15
2 -- Motor Vehicle Registration	2.30

**IIHS STAFF CHANGES** -- Dr. Ernst K. Nilsson, an operations research scientist formerly associated with a research task force in the Chicago Police Department, has joined the IIHS research staff. Dr. Nilsson earned his B. A. degree in economics at Northwestern University in 1964, his M. B. A. from the University of Chicago in 1966 and his Ph. D. in industrial engineering and management science from Northwestern in 1969.

Larry R. Fink, Institute traffic consultant in driver and traffic safety education, has resigned from the Institute to become director of educational relations for the National Consumer Finance Association, Washington, D. C.

**SAFETY ACTIONS DISPERSED** -- A "new arrangement" announced by DOT Secretary Volpe places more control over state and local safety grant activities at the Federal Highway Administration's regional office level. Secretary Volpe told the National Governors' Conference that under the new arrangement, each state will prepare and submit to DOT an annual program of projects eligible for funding under the Highway Safety Act. Once a state's program is approved, he said, day-to-day administration of federal funds for projects under it will be handled by FHWA regional offices instead of by the National Highway Safety Bureau's Washington headquarters, as at present.

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**STATUS REPORT**

FEDERAL ROLE  
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