

1973 Models: Claims Less Frequent, Higher

A new report released by the Highway Loss Data Institute indicates that in general 1973 model cars are producing fewer collision claims but higher payments per claim than their 1972 model counterparts.

“These results,” the report said, “are consistent with evidence suggesting that certain 1973 model bumpers, while reducing the amount of damage resulting from very low speed crashes to amounts less than the collision coverage deductible, also possibly either maintain or augment the cost to repair the damage produced by crashes at somewhat more rapid speeds.”

The 1973 model cars were the first to be covered by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s standard 215 which requires only that bumpers prevent damage to safety related components and only in very low speed crashes – five miles per hour front -into-barrier and 2.5 miles per hour rear-into-barrier.

The report, which draws on insurance collision coverage data from six companies, compared series of 1973 models with 1972 models as to their claim frequency per 100 insured vehicle years, their average loss payments per claim, and their average loss payments per insured vehicle year. Both the 1973 and 1972 model year data were obtained from the same period – September 1972 through July 1973 – from the same six insurance companies.

“In six of the seven market classes with results for both 1973 and 1972 models, the claim frequencies were lower for the 1973 models than the corresponding 1972 models. The percentage reductions ranged from -4% for sub compact and expensive specialty models to -9% for the full size and luxury models. Specialty models showed no change in results between the two model years.

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"In six of the seven market classes, the average loss payment per claim was higher for the 1973 models than for the corresponding 1972 models. The percentage increases ranged from 1% for the compact models to 7% for the full size models. In the luxury models there was a -2% decrease in the average loss payment.

"The average loss payments per insured vehicle year were lower for the 1973 models than the corresponding 1972 models in five of the seven market classes. The percentage decreases ranged from -2% for sub compact and full size models to -12% for luxury models. Expensive specialty models showed no change between the two model years, and specialty models showed a 3% increase.

"Among the seven market classes with results from both model years, the average loss payment per insured vehicle for the 1973 models ranged from \$40 for the full size models to \$75 for the specialty models. The corresponding 1972 model results ranged from \$41 for the full size models to \$73 for the specialty models. The claim frequencies for the 1973 models ranged from 8.4 for the full size models to 14.4 for the specialty models. The corresponding 1972 model results ranged from 9.2 for the full size models to 14.4 for the specialty models. The average loss payments for the 1973 models ranged from \$468 for the compacts to \$526 for the expensive specialty models. The corresponding 1972 model results ranged from \$449 for the full size models to \$528 for the luxury models."

The summary results presented in the tables on pages three and four have been standardized to adjust for different mixes of operator ages and deductibles among the vehicle series. The full report includes extensively-detailed information for combinations of operator age groups and deductibles.

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NHTSA Says 'Buzz Off' At DOT

Apparently a lot of folks at Department of Transportation headquarters in Washington aren't too happy about DOT-required buzzers and lights that remind them to wear safety belts.

One day recently the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration checked 93 employees' cars in DOT headquarters' garage and found that 47 per cent of them "had seat belts circumvented on the driver's side and 43 per cent had the front outboard passenger seat belt circumvented."

The agency may not have detected all of the safety belt warning devices that had been defeated on the 1972 cars they checked because, "No attempt was made to start the vehicle to determine whether the buzzer had been disconnected."

NHTSA found the "primary method of defeat was to leave the belt fastened either on the seat, behind the seat, or on the floor; the second most common method was tying a knot in the belt on the retractor end of the belt; the third approach was hooking the retractor end of the belt under the seat."

Status Report discovered the findings in NHTSA's official in-house *WEEKLY BULLETIN*. Parking in the garage is limited to employees of several DOT agencies, including NHTSA, which required the warning devices. The agency did not report how many of the surveyed cars were registered to NHTSA employees.

The report also provides the following results for 20 popular 1972 and 1973 model year series -- five each in the four most common market classes of sub compact, compact, intermediate and full size. (The greater exposure of any particular series, the more confidence may be placed in the results shown for it.) Results for "All" vehicle series (listed below and on page four) include the 20 series (listed below), plus all other private passenger vehicle series from the 13 makes.

**AVERAGE LOSS PAYMENT PER INSURED VEHICLE YEAR, CLAIM FREQUENCIES AND
AVERAGE LOSS PAYMENT BY MAKE AND SERIES - 1973 AND 1972 MODELS - COLLISION COVERAGES**

MARKET CLASS, MAKE/SERIES	TOTAL EXPOSURE (INSURED VEHICLE YEARS)		AVERAGE LOSS PAYMENT PER INSURED VEHICLE YEAR			CLAIM FREQUENCY PER 100 INSURED VEHICLE YEARS			AVERAGE LOSS PAYMENT PER CLAIM		
	1972	1973	1972	1973	% Change	1972	1973	% Change	1972	1973	% Change
All Series	777,911	288,890	\$50	\$49	- 2	10.7	10.1	- 6	\$465	\$484	+ 4
Sub Compact											
Ford Pinto S.W.	7,679	8,254	55	48	- 13	11.8	10.9	- 8	463	441	- 5
Volkswagen Beetle	29,485	12,098	49	49	0	10.9	11.2	+ 3	445	439	- 1
Ford Pinto	35,058	9,002	65	60	- 8	13.8	12.3	- 11	473	485	+ 3
AMC Gremlin	8,520	4,107	71	65	- 8	13.3	12.6	- 5	535	518	- 3
Chevrolet Vega	26,056	10,677	53	67	+26	11.6	12.6	+ 9	454	533	+17
Compact											
Dodge Dart Swinger	12,214	3,541	41	30	- 27	9.2	7.8	- 15	445	382	- 14
Plymouth Valiant Duster	19,261	6,748	60	45	- 25	12.1	10.7	- 12	493	424	- 14
Chevrolet Nova	30,701	11,626	43	46	+ 7	9.9	8.9	- 10	434	515	+19
AMC Hornet	4,024	2,665	55	53	- 4	12.1	10.7	- 12	451	498	+10
Ford Maverick-2 Dr.	22,069	5,217	50	61	+22	10.3	12.5	+21	485	488	+ 1
Intermediate											
Buick Century-2 Dr.*	10,780	5,566	46	39	- 15	10.2	8.4	- 18	453	468	+ 3
Chevrolet Monte Carlo	17,595	8,750	57	47	- 18	11.7	10.7	- 9	490	442	- 10
Chevrolet Chevelle-2 Dr.	21,394	5,583	54	47	- 13	10.4	9.5	- 9	516	499	- 3
Ford Torino-2 Dr.	20,364	5,783	57	51	- 11	12.5	11.8	- 6	457	434	- 5
Oldsmobile Cutlass-2 Dr.	20,180	9,140	55	55	0	11.4	9.9	- 13	483	557	+15
Full Size											
Pontiac Catalina	17,823	6,229	34	33	- 3	7.5	7.4	- 1	450	449	0
Chevrolet Caprice	13,733	6,282	35	34	- 3	8.0	7.4	- 8	432	458	+ 6
Chevrolet Impala	43,918	8,221	36	36	0	8.4	8.4	0	427	430	+ 1
Oldsmobile Delta 88	19,128	6,604	35	41	+17	8.5	7.5	- 12	412	548	+33
Ford LTD	31,565	11,976	47	51	+ 9	10.0	9.4	- 6	466	544	+17

*Corresponds to 1972 Skylark-2 door models.

The following chart graphically shows the comparative results by market class:

LOSS PAYMENT SUMMARY BY MARKET CLASS – 1973 AND 1972 MODELS – COLLISION COVERAGES

MARKET CLASS	CLAIM FREQUENCY PER 100 INSURED VEHICLE YEARS			AVERAGE LOSS PAYMENT PER CLAIM			AVERAGE LOSS PAYMENT PER INSURED VEHICLE YEAR		
	1972	1973	% Change	1972	1973	% Change	1972	1973	% Change
All Series	10.7	10.1	- 6	\$465	\$484	+ 4	\$ 50	\$ 49	- 2
Sub Compact	12.1	11.6	- 4	469	480	+ 2	57	56	- 2
Compact	10.5	9.9	- 6	465	468	+ 1	49	46	- 6
Intermediate	10.8	10.0	- 7	465	478	+ 3	50	48	- 4
Full Size	9.2	8.4	- 9	449	480	+ 7	41	40	- 2
Luxury	11.1	10.1	- 9	528	517	- 2	59	52	-12
Specialty	14.4	14.4	0	510	522	+ 2	73	75	+ 3
Expensive Specialty	12.9	12.4	- 4	502	526	+ 5	65	65	0
Sports	15.1	(insufficient data)		850	(insufficient data)		128	(insufficient data)	

The HLDI report is the organization's second. (See *Status Report*, Vol. 8, No. 12, June 15, 1973.) It was based on more than 100,000 collision coverage claims and on collision coverages involving more than 280,000 insured vehicle years of exposure for passenger cars of the 1973 model year and more than 770,000 vehicle years of exposure for those of the 1972 model year. In the future, HLDI plans to publish loss results during the first year of availability of the involved vehicles, to include additional makes, and to base the results on larger volumes of data from additional companies.

HLDI (pronounced "hildy") was formed in December, 1972, as an outgrowth of a special data project initiated earlier by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. (See *Status Report*, Vol. 8, No. 1, Jan. 3, 1973.) It is a nonprofit organization that gathers, processes and provides the public with insurance data concerned with human and economic losses resulting from highway crashes.

The membership of the board represents the eight insurance companies – Allstate Insurance Co., The Hartford Insurance Group, The Home Insurance Co., Kemper Insurance Group, Liberty Mutual Insurance Co., Nationwide Mutual Insurance Co., State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Co. and The Travelers Insurance Co. – that are supplying data to HLDI. The financial support for HLDI is provided by the eight companies and by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, which in turn is supported by most automobile insurers either directly or through their trade associations. The new report is based on collision coverages – that is, insurance that covers damage to the insured vehicle itself – supplied by six of the companies: Allstate, The Home, Kemper, Liberty, Nationwide and State Farm.

The full report, entitled *Automobile Insurance Losses, Collision Coverages, Initial Results for 1973 Models Compared with 1972 Models*, (Research Report R73-1, September 1973) is available in single copies by writing to "R73-1," Highway Loss Data Institute, Watergate 600, Washington, D.C. 20037. It includes detailed discussion of the data analysis employed in the study.

Off The Track

Racers Crash, Speed More Than Others

Top-rated race drivers have more highway crashes, are charged with more highway speeding violations and are cited for other traffic law infractions more often than run-of-the-mill motorists, an Insurance Institute for Highway Safety study has revealed.

The research compares the highway driving records of 447 "national competition license" holding race drivers in Florida, New York and Texas with those of 1053 other drivers in those states. It finds that "the driving records of Sports Car Club of America national competition license holders contained many more violations and more crashes than the driving records of comparison drivers of the same sex and age.

"In each state the race drivers had higher average numbers of crashes and violations in every category analyzed than the matched drivers."

The Sports Car Club of America sponsors such racing events as the Daytona 24-hour, the Sebring 12-hour, the U. S. Grand Prix and the Canadian-American Challenge Cup series, according to the club's promotional material. The organization issues three grades of licenses: a novice permit, a regional license, and — its top rating — a national competition license. A novice permit holder must have attended and passed a SCCA sponsored drivers' school that includes at least six hours of in-car, on-course time. Subsequent participation in two sanctioned competitive events within two years qualifies a driver for a regional license. A regional license holder who completes at least four events within two years qualifies for a national license.

"National competition license holders constitute a special group on the basis of interest in racing, advanced education and training in emergency driving techniques and experience in crash-avoidance situations," the IIHS study notes.

This is how the surveyed records of the "national competition license" holders compare with those of other drivers:

Crashes Per Driver. The average number of reported highway crashes per driver was higher for the race drivers than the comparison drivers in each state — 0.28 compared with 0.14 in Florida, 0.64 compared with 0.42 in New York, and 0.58 compared with 0.49 in Texas.

Speeding Violations. The average number of speeding violations was also considerably higher for the race drivers than comparison drivers in each state — 1.28 compared with 0.44 in Florida, 1.06 compared with 0.35 in New York, and 1.63 compared with 0.88 in Texas.

Other Moving Violations. The average number of other moving violations was also higher for the race drivers than it was for the comparison drivers — 0.65 compared with 0.50 in Florida, 0.49 compared with 0.38 in New York, and 0.46 compared with 0.43 in Texas.

Non-Moving Violations. The average number of non-moving violations was also higher for the race drivers compared with other drivers — 0.22 compared with 0.17 in Florida, 0.17 compared with 0.07 in New York, and 0.22 compared with 0.15 in Texas.

The results of the IIHS research "suggest a need for caution regarding the assumption that advanced driver education crash avoidance and related techniques can be translated into reduced crash experience," the report says.

'MASTER LICENSE' ADVOCATES CAUTIONED

The study results raise "considerable doubt as to the validity of a Master Driver License concept" that has been given serious consideration by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and is endorsed by many auto racing enthusiasts. Holders of the Sports Car Club of America "national competition license" – the group, in other words, whose violation and crash record is worse than ordinary drivers – would "presumably qualify for a Master Driver License," the report points out.

Last year, then-NHTSA administrator Douglas W. Toms told attendees at an agency-sponsored workshop on "advanced driver education techniques" that the "true objective" of the meeting was "to try to formulate a concept of a master driver license."

He said the agency envisioned a program in which "the applicant would have to take some kind of advanced training or high performance driver training and then go in and prove his ability in both a physical and a mental way . . . we think people who hold this license may be then eligible for superior privileges in our society. This might range from a reduction on their annual insurance premium, it might permit them reduced rates on tollways, there may be any number of things. They might be eligible for membership in clubs which would permit them to own their car for less money or be able to do things because of their advanced skills which would provide them with a high quality of life."

According to the IIHS study, "There are indications that the belief that the race driver has fewer crashes and is perhaps more law-abiding than the average driver, is shared by the racing fraternity. For example, in discussing the on-the-road experience of race drivers, a recent editorial in *Road and Track* magazine states, 'I have for many years claimed that the licensed racer is far safer than ordinary chaps, on grounds of practiced skills, mental ability, cognizance in the hazards of driving, keen interest in driving well, and so on.'"

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AVERAGE NUMBERS OF REPORTED CRASHES AND VIOLATIONS PER DRIVER BY STATE

	State	Average Number Per Driver	
		Race Drivers	Comparison Drivers
Reported Crashes	Florida	0.28	0.14
	New York	0.64	0.42
	Texas	0.58	0.49
Speeding Violations	Florida	1.28	0.44
	New York	1.06	0.35
	Texas	1.63	0.88
Other Moving Violations	Florida	0.65	0.50
	New York	0.49	0.38
	Texas	0.46	0.43
Non-Moving Violations	Florida	0.22	0.17
	New York	0.17	0.07
	Texas	0.22	0.15

However, the study concludes, the fact is that “national competition race drivers, who have the training and experience necessary to qualify for a Master Driver License, and who would likely be among those most interested in obtaining such a license, do not have lower crash and violation rates per driver than do comparable groups of other drivers. In fact, the state records studied show conclusively that they generate far more than their per capita share of crashes and violations.”

The study cautions that although definitive data are not available, records supplied by New York state indicate that race drivers “claim to drive considerably more miles than do others of their age and sex. Therefore, the results do not indicate whether or not race drivers would have higher crash and violation rates than the run-of-the-mill drivers when mileage is taken into account.”

The study was conducted by IIHS research staff members Allan F. Williams and Brian O’Neill. Copies of the study may be obtained by writing “Race Drivers,” Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, Watergate Six Hundred, Washington, D.C. 20037.

Auto Makers Contest Fuel System Rule

An amended federal standard on fuel system crashworthiness – criticized by Rep. John E. Moss (D-Calif.) as too weak – has been challenged by auto makers.

The Motor Vehicle Manufacturers’ Association in a petition for reconsideration of the standard, particularly objected to a new requirement for a static rollover test following the 30-mile-per-hour frontal barrier crash now in the standard – claiming that fuel could leak from “a number of sources,” during such a procedure. (See *Status Report*, Vol. 8, No. 17, Sept. 10, 1973.)

Chrysler Corp. said it “knows of no feasible means which could be developed in the time frame allowed for compliance to meet the requirements . . . that fuel spillage during the static rollover test shall not exceed one ounce per minute. Tests show there can be as much as a four-ounce loss of fuel from the carburetor bowl during this test,” that company said.

Ford Motor Co. challenged the entire amended standard on a cost-benefit basis, maintaining that “the yearly benefits of compliance were estimated at just under \$50 million, with an associated cost to consumers of \$137 million.”

General Motors Corp. strenuously objected to the requirement that test vehicles be loaded to their gross vehicle weight rate, calling it “not representative of the real world.” GM said that unless its suggested revisions are adopted, “General Motors cannot meet the effective dates of this amendment and we do not know when we would be able to comply.”

American Motors asked for a delay in the effective date from Sept. 1, 1975, to Sept. 1, 1976, claiming that the test procedure “presents certain component design challenges for which there are no ready ‘off the shelf’ answers.”

Additional statements of opposition were filed with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration by the Recreational Vehicle Institute, Inc., Jeep Corp. (a wholly owned subsidiary of American Motors Corp.), International Harvester Corp., Mercedes-Benz of North America, Nissan Motor Co., Ltd. and Japan Automobile Manufacturers Assoc.

NHTSA Goes After VW's 'Thing'

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has moved to force Volkswagen's model 181, known as the Thing, off the American market unless the German auto maker can certify that the Mexican-manufactured vehicle meets U.S. passenger car safety standards.

NHTSA originally allowed VW to classify and sell the vehicle in this country as a multi-purpose passenger vehicle (MPV). Such vehicles are not required to meet many of the safety standards that apply to passenger cars. Now, prodded by attorney Ralph Nader, the agency has decided that the Thing is a passenger car – *not* a MPV.

According to NHTSA, a multi-purpose vehicle is a motor vehicle designed to carry 10 persons or less which is constructed on a truck chassis, or constructed with special features for occasional off-road operation. The types of vehicles NHTSA considered to be MPV's were built on truck chassis and generally

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NHTSA May Seek Consumer Information Deadline Delay

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration may ask the Congress for more time to implement the consumer information portion of the Motor Vehicle Information and Cost Savings Act of 1972.

In response to questions from Sen. Phillip A. Hart (D-Mich.), NHTSA Administrator James B. Gregory said in a recent letter that, "Delay in funding of the tasks prescribed will not permit meeting the stringent deadlines and schedule outlined in the Act."

As outlined in Gregory's letter, the agency plans to:

- Issue a bumper standard calling for no damage in low speed crashes (0-20 miles per hour) "in early 1974."
- Ask the Congress to postpone requirements for making vehicle crashworthiness information available to consumers. The Act requires publication of the information by Feb. 1, 1975. Although "initial consumer information" may be available by "late 1974," the agency does not expect "final study efforts" to be completed until 1975. Gregory did not say when the information would be published.
- Initiate two diagnostic inspection projects in 1974 with three more slated for 1975.
- Report "in October" to the Congress on an odometer research program now underway. The agency issued a "no-tamper" odometer rule in January, 1973, that became effective in March, 1973.

The Congress granted NHTSA its requested \$15 million to implement the Act – but not until the current fiscal year had already started. Under funding provisions of the Cost Savings Act, the agency could have requested \$37 million.

had four-wheel drive. The fact they had features for off-road operation was considered "redundant" by the agency.

Now NHTSA proposes to change its MPV definition to clearly exclude the Thing from that category. The Thing is built on a basic VW Beetle car chassis. It met the government's MPV definition only because VW claimed that the vehicle has "special features for occasional off-road operation," NHTSA said in its proposal (*Federal Register*, Sept. 4, 1973).

The NHTSA proposal would continue to exempt MPV's designed to carry 10 persons or less built on a "truck chassis," a term that has never been clearly defined by the agency.

Several months ago, NHTSA rejected a similar Volkswagen claim that the Thing is a MPV. In a March 19, 1973, letter to Volkswagen, Francis Armstrong, director of NHTSA's office of standards enforcement for motor vehicle programs, wrote: "An analysis of information in our possession would indicate that the vehicle in question is, in fact, a passenger car. Unless satisfactory evidence is submitted that would support your classification to the contrary we would insist that the Volkswagen model 181 be certified as a passenger car and be manufactured to conform to the applicable Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards."

In an April 2 reply, Volkswagen noted that one of NHTSA's objections to the Thing's MPV classification was that the vehicle did not have four-wheel drive. Volkswagen pointed out that this feature is not in the NHTSA definition of a multi-purpose vehicle and dismissed the importance of the feature in off-road operation.

Within four days, NHTSA had reclassified the Thing as a multi-purpose vehicle.

On July 23, Ralph Nader and associate Carl Nash wrote to urge that NHTSA "... enjoin further importation, distribution, and sales of 'The Thing' until these vehicles can be brought into compliance with all applicable standards for passenger cars." They also asked NHTSA to issue a recall for the Thing and have the vehicles retrofitted to meet passenger car safety standards.

A spokesman for Volkswagen told *Status Report* the company intended to file comments protesting what it called the government's discriminatory action against the Thing. Volkswagen claims the Thing follows that part of the MPV definition that calls for occasional off-road operation. Approximately 3,500 Volkswagen Things reportedly are in operation throughout the United States.

Also in its September 4 proposal, NHTSA noted it was proceeding with plans to extend to MPV's many of the standards currently applicable only to passenger cars. The Center for Auto Safety had asked for this in a March 22, 1973, petition to the agency. (See *Status Report*, Vol. 8, No. 10, May 7, 1973.)

The effective date of the proposed new definition would be Sept. 1, 1974. The comment closing date is Oct. 15, 1973. Comments should refer to Docket Number 73-21, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Room 5221, 400 Seventh St., S.W. Washington, D.C. 20590.

Kielty Joins IIHS

James P. Kielty has joined the communications staff of the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. Formerly, he was supervisor of the National Safety Council's road safety public information effort. Prior to that he edited Northwestern University Traffic Institute's *Traffic Digest and Review*.

Kielty has an AB from Loyola University, Chicago.

Defect Found In Cadillacs, GM Balks At Recall

Concluding a year long investigation, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has found that some 60,000 Cadillacs of the 1959-1960 model year have a safety related steering defect. General Motors, however, has neither agreed to notify owners of the agency's finding nor offered to recall the cars.

In its defect investigation report, the agency concludes that the "potential hazard . . . in the pitman arm failures is the catastrophic loss of steering control without warning to the driver . . ." The pitman arm connects the steering shaft to the steering linkage.

The agency estimates that the total cost of repairs and defect notification could be \$1.5-million. Although present law does not require a manufacturer to recall or correct vehicles with defects without charging consumers, Rep. John E. Moss (D-Calif.), chairman of the House Subcommittee on Commerce and Finance, commented, "The only equitable thing for the company to do in this case is to pay the costs of repairs." (Moss' subcommittee is now considering an amendment to the 1966 Motor Vehicle Safety Act that would require manufacturers to recall when a defect is discovered and force them to reimburse owners for repairs. A similar measure has already passed the Senate.)

The report attributes pitman arm failure to "metal fatigue" caused by stress exerted in parking and other low speed maneuvers. "High speed failures" can also occur, according to the report.

The pitman arm problem first surfaced in September, 1972, when the Center for Auto Safety wrote NHTSA alleging a defect in 1959-1960 Cadillacs. The Center sent the agency 33 consumer complaint letters claiming failure of the pitman arm. It said that "numerous" crashes and injuries have been caused by the defect, and at least two deaths have been alleged to have resulted "from the steering failures."

Last spring, Richard C. Gerstenberg, GM's board chairman, stated that there have been "only eight alleged accidents that might have been caused by pitman arm failure" and that in only one instance did the owner claim anything more than "minor damage."

According to its report, NHTSA interviewed nine consumers who had written letters claiming pitman arm failure on their 1959-1960 Cadillacs. In five of the cases, the failures occurred at low speeds — less than 20 miles per hour. In two of the cases, accidents occurred at 65 miles per hour, one involving serious injury. However, the absence of "physical evidence" prevented investigators from determining whether or not the pitman arm had in fact failed. One crash was determined to have been caused by pitman arm failure at 50 miles per hour, without injury. An alleged failure at 5 miles per hour was not proven to be related to the pitman arm, the agency says.

NHTSA says that the 1959-1960 model-year Cadillac pitman arms are "distinct from those used in preceding or following model years." Replacement figures show the significance of these design differences. For the 1957-1958 and the 1961-1962 models, 4,519 and 4,423 pitman arms were replaced. For the 1959-1960 models, however, 26,424 pitman arms were replaced.

GM has told NHTSA that "the possibility of accidents or injury because of potential pitman arm failures in 1959-1960 model Cadillacs still in service is extremely remote and that no unreasonable risk of accident exists." GM claims "there is no need for a recall campaign," according to NHTSA's report. The company will have an opportunity to present its views and evidence at a meeting with NHTSA officials set for Oct. 24, 1973.

GM claims that since pitman arm failures occur at low speeds a recall is unnecessary. The NHTSA report points out that, according to the National Safety Council, "10.7 per cent of all fatal accidents and

34.2 per cent of all injury accidents occur at approximate speeds of between 0-19 miles per hour." Although the NHTSA could not substantiate any fatalities or injuries due to pitman arm failure, the report says that "pitman arm failures in 1959 and 1960 model year Cadillacs have occurred within the parameters of these speeds." This is a "fact which cannot be ignored," the agency concludes.

Lowell Dodge, director of the Center for Auto Safety, declared the agency's decision a "significant victory" but cautioned that "the real battle is yet to come." Dodge stated that the Center "would not put it past GM to tie this up in the courts indefinitely."

A spokesman for GM refused to comment on Dodge's remarks but did read GM's prepared statement: "The 1959-60 Cadillac pitman arm accusations were initiated by the Center for Auto Safety last summer. We immediately investigated those charges thoroughly and reported our findings to NHTSA. The information accumulated and demonstrated to NHTSA confirmed our opinion that this does not constitute a safety risk and we will continue to cooperate with NHTSA."

NHTSA Sets Used Car Inspection Standards

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has issued its long-awaited vehicle-in-use inspection standards. The inspections prescribed by the agency are limited to brakes, steering, suspension, tires and wheels. The inspection standards are supposed to be implemented by the states. However, the agency has no plans to act against states that don't implement them.

Under the 1966 Highway Safety Act, the Secretary of Transportation can withhold a state's highway safety funds and 10 per cent of its highway construction fund if, in his opinion, the state is not making satisfactory progress in implementing national highway safety standards. This authority has never been exercised. An NHTSA official said the department's policy is to "encourage, not mandate" compliance with the law.

Presently, 31 states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia have periodic motor vehicle inspection programs (PMVI) approved by the Secretary. California and Michigan have random vehicle inspection programs considered by the Secretary to meet the PMVI standard. Seven other states have random or spot vehicle inspection programs that do not meet federal requirements. Ten states have no vehicle inspection.

The standards are virtually the same as those proposed by the government last April. (See *Status Report*, Vol. 8, No. 10, May 7, 1973). They are not intended to supplant state standards that may already require tougher inspections, nor to discourage states from establishing or maintaining standards for other vehicle systems not covered, NHTSA claims.

The National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1966 directed DOT to study the need for used vehicle standards and report its findings by September, 1967. In a detailed June, 1968, report to the Congress, entitled *Safety for Motor Vehicles in Use*, DOT outlined a used vehicle safety program which would center on "mandatory periodic vehicle inspection in the states" and safety performance standards for used vehicles. The report also covered several other areas of NHTSA's projected used vehicle safety program. They included:

- Standards for licensing repair shops and establishing skill levels for mechanics;
- Equipment standards for replacement parts;

- Performance requirements that new motor vehicles would have to meet after periods of extended use;
- Safety standards that would facilitate diagnosis and repair of worn and failed parts.

Carl Nash of Ralph Nader's Public Interest Research Group told *Status Report* he considers the standards incomplete because, among other things, "there is no provision for inspection for corrosion deterioration . . . nor for the inspection of major crash damage to make sure that repairs were made to return the car to an acceptable level of safety." Theoretically, a car could pass the NHTSA-required inspections even if safety belts have been removed.

EXPANDED INSPECTION URGED

The Center for Auto Safety had urged NHTSA to include inspection criteria on vehicle lighting, windows and windshield wipers. The National Safety Council had urged that the agency require inspection of all cars involved in recall campaigns to be sure that defects have been remedied. The Council said the failure of the standards to deal with recall-related defects allowed a "serious problem to remain unsolved."

NHTSA said that inspection requirements for what it termed "less critical systems" are under study and that the agency intends "to take such rulemaking action in the future as may be appropriate to cover them."

Nash called the standards "meaningless" until such time as the states begin to utilize them. He also termed the standards "inadequate" because they only covered vehicles under 10,000 pounds.

On Feb. 23, 1973, Nash sued the Secretary of Transportation and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to have them establish uniform federal motor vehicle safety standards applicable to all used motor vehicles. On July 31, the United States District Court in the District of Columbia ordered the Secretary of Transportation to propose, no later than Oct. 11, 1973, safety standards for motor vehicles-in-use with gross vehicle weight ratings in excess of 10,000 pounds. NHTSA claims it is developing those court-ordered inspection standards and will propose them in a notice to be issued by mid-October, 1973.

The effective date of the standard is Sept. 28, 1973.

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STATUS REPORT

Ralph W. Hoar, Jr., Editor

INSURANCE INSTITUTE for HIGHWAY SAFETY
WATERGATE SIX HUNDRED • WASHINGTON, D.C. 20037
(AREA CODE 202-333-0770)