insurance institute for highway safety

the highway loss reduction

Status Report

Vol. 14, No. 14 September 7, 1979

The Human Costs Of Air Bag Delay

39,000 Lives Might Have Been Saved

In the first effort to identify the human costs of the interminable delays in adopting the lifesaving air bag technology, the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety has calculated that nearly 39,000 persons died on the nation's highways from 1975 through 1978 who might have been saved by air bags.

The figures, prepared in response to a request from Rep. Bob. Eckhardt (D.-Tex.), chairman of the House Commerce Committee's Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, point out an estimated 9,103 front-seat passenger car occupant deaths that might have been avoided in 1975 had air bags been generally available. That human toll increased to 9,462 in 1976, 9,642 in 1977, and 10,516 in 1978.

With the nationwide total estimate, the Institute offered a state-by-state breakdown of the figures. The data were based on records from the Fatal Accident Reporting System (FARS) maintained by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. "These data record essential characteristics of the real-world fatal crashes occurring across the nation," the Institute explained.

"Currently there is pending in the House of Representatives an amendment to forbid, at least for the time being, the Department of Transportation from enforcing its Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard No. 208 in a way that would permit car manufacturers to meet the standard by providing air bag systems in new cars," Eckhardt wrote to the Institute. (See *Status Report*, Vol. 14, No. 13, Aug. 21, 1979.) "Should that amendment succeed, it may well frustrate the provision of air bag protection to American car buyers for years to come, since it will inject substantial uncertainty into the current planning of the auto industry and its suppliers for future air bag production. Thus, a situation may be perpetuated that has gone on

(Cont'd on page 6)

Air Bags Have Passed The On-The-Road Test

Air bag protection for vehicle occupants, long denied most of the motoring public, has proved its effectiveness in crashes ranging all across the country, a new analysis of air bag deployment crashes has revealed.

The analysis, made by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety in response to a request from Rep. Henry A. Waxman (D.-Calif.), a member of the House Commerce Committee, reported on 228 known crashes through July of air bag-equipped vehicles severe enough to deploy the bags. The crashes (222 in the United States and 6 in other countries) involved some 330 persons in front seating positions equipped with air bags.

William Haddon, Jr., M.D., Institute president, summarized the lifesaving effects in a letter to Waxman: "Since at least as far back as our first analysis, in 1976, of the experience up to that time, the reductions in life-

(Cont'd on page 2)

Air Bags Have Passed The On-The-Road Test *(Cont'd from page 1)*

threatening injuries, compared with unrestrained occupants in similar cars, in severe frontal crashes have been very impressive, continuing to run within a few percentage points of 65 per cent.

"The reductions in injury have especially involved reductions in severe *multiple* injuries, an especially important accomplishment because, as we have known in the medical profession for a very long time, severe multiple injuries greatly and disproportionately increase the likelihood of death."

The real-world deployment crashes have involved 228 of the more than 12,000 cars of the 1972-1976 model years that have been equipped with air bag protection. "By very conservative estimate," Haddon said, "air bag cars have been driven a total of over 600 million miles on U.S. and Canadian roads, the equivalent of some 25,000 times completely around the world at the equator."

In a letter to the Institute, Waxman pointed to the urgency of the occupant protection problem: "I have become increasingly concerned at attempts, including one now pending in the House, to frustrate the intentions of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard No. 208 to the extent the standard would permit auto companies to provide their customers with air bag systems for protection in frontal crashes.

"Before this matter comes to a vote in the House, I would like to give my colleagues and constituents some basic information about the actual performance of air bag systems in crashes in the real world."

The Institute's analysis showed, for the first time, a state-by-state breakdown of the 228 real-world deployment crashes reported to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration through July. (See map, page 3.) "This shows clearly," Haddon pointed out, "that this modern crash protection technology has been in use far more in Michigan, with 45 air bag deployment crashes, than in any other state." (Michigan is the home state of Rep. John Dingell, the air bag's most outspoken critic on Capitol Hill.)

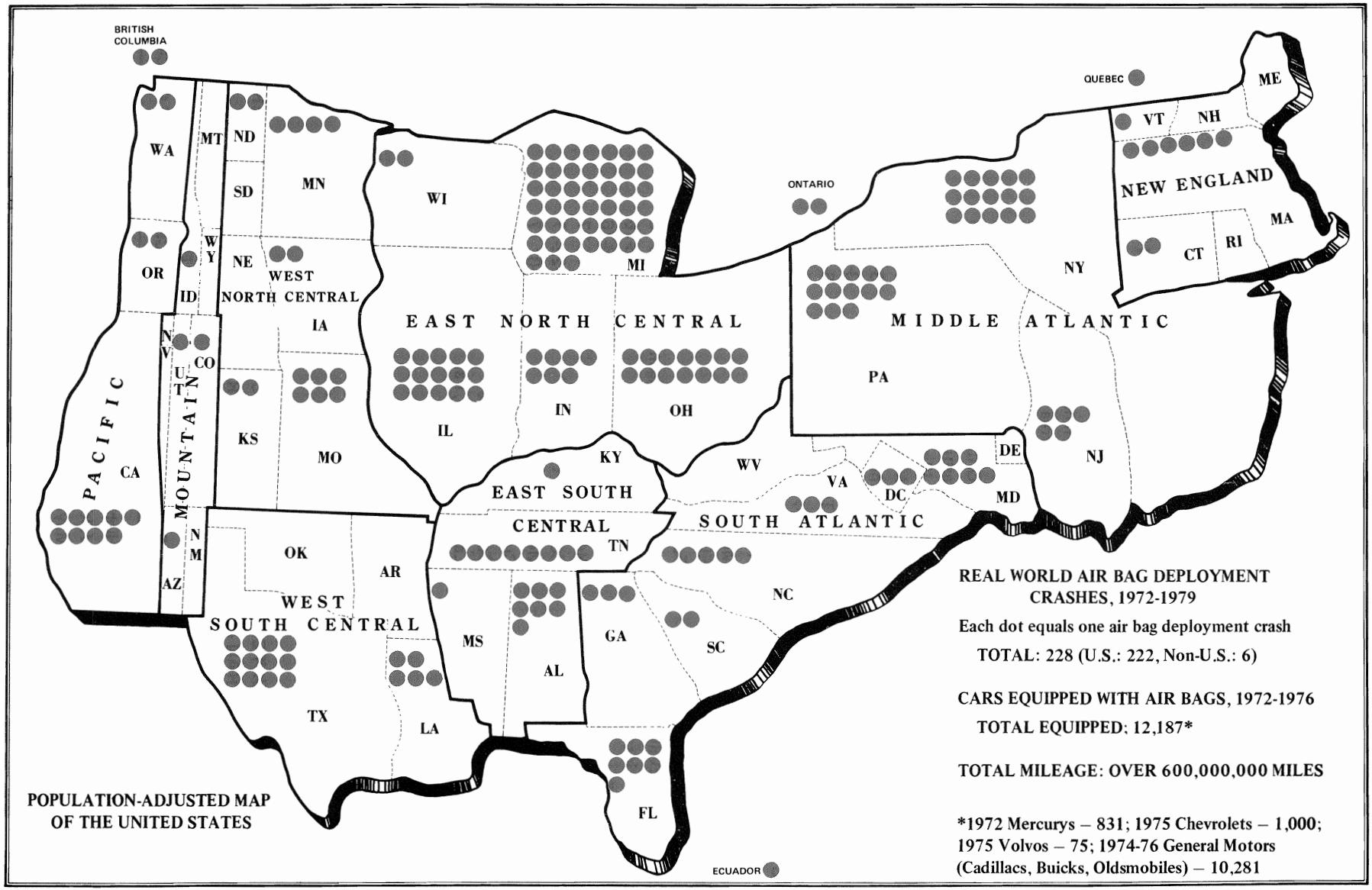
In 34 other states, as well as three Canadian provinces and one South American country, air bag deployment crashes have taken place. Of these, 15 each have occurred in Illinois and New York, 14 in Ohio, 13 in Pennsylvania, 12 in Texas, and 9 in California.

'HAVE THEY FUNCTIONED PROPERLY?'

In his letter to the Institute, Waxman expressed special interest in how reliably the air bag equipment has performed in its extensive real-world test. "What have been the characteristics of air bag-equipped cars operating in the real world?" he asked. "Have they functioned properly despite extreme ranges of temperature? How has their age, in terms of model year manufactured, and mileage, affected their performance?"

Air bags have functioned well across the many varieties of operational and climatic conditions and mileage, Haddon stated. "In addition, in further answer to your question," he wrote, "I am enclosing attachments . . . which list, respectively, air bag deployment crashes that have involved high and low temperatures (see page 4), and the great deal of similarly excellent experience with crashes of cars that had accumulated high mileages by the time they were involved in air bag deployment crashes (see page 4)."

"Such excellent performance under varied conditions and long after manufacture directly reflects the fact that air bag systems in vehicles are themselves protected from wear and tear by being sealed unobtrusively out of sight. Like such older automatic emergency protection devices as fuses, circuit breakers, sprinkler systems, and boiler safety valves, air bags have been very successfully designed for both long-term reliability and instant response. They do their job very well and are a tribute to modern American technology."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NJ
PA
NY
MIDDLE ATLANTIC
SOUTH ATLANTIC
ME
VT
NH
MA
CT
RI
NEW ENGLAND
PACIFIC
MOUNTAIN
POPULATION-ADJUSTED MAP OF THE UNITED STATES
REAL WORLD AIR BAG DEPLOYMENT CRASHES, 1972-1979
Each dot equals one air bag deployment crash
TOTAL: 228 (U.S.: 222, Non-U.S.: 6)
CARS EQUIPPED WITH AIR BAGS, 1972-1976
TOTAL EQUIPPED: 12,187*
TOTAL MILEAGE: OVER 600,000,000 MILES
*1972 Mercurys – 831; 1975 Chevrolets – 1,000; 1975 Volvos – 75; 1974-76 General Motors (Cadillacs, Buicks, Oldsmobiles) – 10,281

AIR BAG DEPLOYMENT CRASHES INVOLVING HIGH AND LOW TEMPERATURES

MAKE & MODEL	LOCATION OF CRASH	DATE OF CRASH	TEMPERATURE AT TIME OF CRASH (F°)
1974 Oldsmobile Delta 88 Royale	Schiller Park, Illinois	2-08-74	20-29°
1973 Chevrolet Impala	Highland, Michigan	2-15-74	19°
1974 Buick Riviera	Houston, Texas	8-23-74	90°
1975 Oldsmobile Regency 98	Cabano, Quebec	11-21-74	20°
1974 Buick Electra Custom	Columbus, Ohio	2-06-75	20's
1974 Oldsmobile Toronado	Syracuse, New York	3-14-75	27°
1973 Chevrolet Impala	Landover, Maryland	5-21-75	89°
1973 Chevrolet Impala	Needles, California	6-07-75	94°
1974 Buick Electra 225	Oyster Bay, New York	7-02-75	87°
1975 Buick Electra Limited	Ashland, New York	12-04-75	24°
1975 Oldsmobile Regency 98	Vaughan, Ontario	12-18-75	12°
1973 Chevrolet Impala	Seattle, Washington	1-01-76	31°
1975 Oldsmobile Toronado	Lombard, Illinois	1-08-76	<0°
1975 Cadillac DeVille	Bay City, Michigan	1-21-76	Lower 20's
1975 Cadillac Fleetwood	Peru, Vermont	3-07-76	30°
1974 Oldsmobile Delta 88 Royale	Lake Villa, Illinois	3-11-76	20-29°
1974 Oldsmobile 98 Regency	Tyler, Texas	6-12-76	85-90°
1975 Oldsmobile Toronado	Boston, Massachusetts	7-19-76	88°
1976 Oldsmobile Delta 88	Camden, New Jersey	7-31-76	85°
1975 Oldsmobile 98	Richmond Cty., North Carolina	9-05-76	85-90°
1974 Buick Electra 225	Montrose, Michigan	11-21-76	30-34°
1976 Cadillac Fleetwood	Elmhurst, Illinois	12-01-76	0-19°
1975 Oldsmobile 98 Regency	Faribault, Minnesota	12-05-76	<0°
1974 Cadillac DeVille	Sterling Heights, Michigan	12-23-76	0-19°
1974 Cadillac Eldorado	Detroit, Michigan	12-26-76	30°
1975 Cadillac Eldorado	Detroit, Michigan	12-28-76	24°
1976 Oldsmobile 98 Regency	New York, New York	1-15-77	26°
1975 Oldsmobile 98	Columbus, Ohio	2-22-77	20-29°
1974 Oldsmobile 98	Mendon, New York	3-01-77	22°
1975 Oldsmobile Toronado	Culver, Oregon	4-02-77	20°
1975 Oldsmobile Toronado	Cocoa Beach, Florida	7-27-77	85-90°
1975 Oldsmobile Regency 98	Lawrence Township, Pa.	12-09-77	9°
1975 Oldsmobile 98	Cass City, Michigan	1-15-78	15-20°
1975 Oldsmobile Delta 88	Moraine, Ohio	2-06-78	7°
1974 Oldsmobile Delta 88	Perry, Michigan	2-14-78	17°
1975 Oldsmobile Toronado	Charlotte, Michigan	3-06-78	28°
1975 Cadillac Fleetwood Talisman	Detroit, Michigan	2-15-79	15°

AIR BAG-EQUIPPED CRASH-INVOLVED VEHICLES WITH MILEAGES GREATER THAN 40,000 AT THE TIME OF AIR BAG DEPLOYMENT

MAKE & MODEL	LOCATION OF CRASH	DATE OF CRASH	MILEAGE AT TIME OF CRASH
1973 Chevrolet Impala	Highland, Michigan	2-15-74	54,999
1972 Mercury Monterey Custom	Valdosta, Georgia	8-22-74	63,084
1974 Oldsmobile 98 Regency	Mayhew, Mississippi	2-19-75	53,754
1973 Chevrolet Impala	Houston, Texas	3-15-75	63,695
1973 Chevrolet Impala	Somerville, Alabama	3-18-75	90,445

(Cont'd on page 5)

MAKE & MODEL	LOCATION OF CRASH	DATE OF CRASH	MILEAGE AT TIME OF CRASH
1973 Chevrolet Impala	San Antonio, Texas	5-08-75	61,030
1973 Chevrolet Impala	Dalton, Georgia	5-09-75	50,663
1973 Chevrolet Impala	Landover, Maryland	5-21-75	48,795
1973 Chevrolet Impala	Needles, California	6-07-75	67,333
1973 Chevrolet Impala	Milford, Michigan	7-09-75	49,320
1973 Chevrolet Impala	Seattle, Washington	1-01-76	57,165
1973 Chevrolet Impala	West Bloomfield, Michigan	4-11-76	69,255
1974 Oldsmobile Delta 88	Moorpark, California	4-21-76	48,975
1975 Oldsmobile Toronado	DuPage County, Illinois	6-03-76	55,846
1974 Oldsmobile 98 Regency	Amarillo, Texas	7-13-76	45,837
1974 Buick Riviera	Lakewood, Ohio	7-17-76	43,095
1974 Oldsmobile 98	Detroit, Michigan	7-27-76	45,000
1974 Oldsmobile 98	Madison, Wisconsin	8-17-76	69,147
1974 Buick Electra Limited	Baldwin County, Alabama	9-08-76	59,603
1973 Chevrolet Impala	Erie, Pennsylvania	9-14-76	66,031
1974 Buick Riviera	Atchison, Kansas	9-25-76	55,460
1973 Chevrolet Impala	Houghton Lake, Michigan	9-26-76	56,289
1974 Cadillac Eldorado	Mercer, Pennsylvania	10-23-76	43,193
1974 Oldsmobile 98 Regency	Red Oak, Iowa	10-25-76	75,020
1974 Buick Electra 225	Montrose, Michigan	11-21-76	41,744
1973 Chevrolet Impala	Brighton, Michigan	1-21-77	82,354
1974 Oldsmobile 98	Mendon, New York	3-01-77	85,720
1972 Mercury Monterey	Silver Spring, Maryland	3-08-77	69,809
1974 Oldsmobile 98	Hartford, Connecticut	3-18-77	73,582
1973 Chevrolet Impala	Hicksville, New York	3-27-77	114,958
1974 Oldsmobile 98	Tazewell, Tennessee	4-20-77	47,060
1975 Oldsmobile Toronado	Cortland, New York	4-25-77	51,694
1975 Cadillac Eldorado	Chattanooga, Tennessee	5-23-77	41,890
1974 Oldsmobile Toronado	Gary, Indiana	5-27-77	44,789
1975 Cadillac Eldorado	Port Orchard, Washington	6-07-77	48,857
1973 Chevrolet	La Mirada, California	6-14-77	67,066
1974 Oldsmobile 98	Toledo, Ohio	6-23-77	43,140
1974 Oldsmobile	Independence, Missouri	6-25-77	44,195
1973 Chevrolet Impala	Detroit, Michigan	7-05-77	83,811
1975 Cadillac Coupe DeVille	Akron, Ohio	7-15-77	61,114
1973 Chevrolet Impala	Burnsville, Minnesota	7-16-77	95,842
1975 Buick Electra 225	Minot, North Dakota	7-28-77	43,490
1974 Buick Riviera	Quito, Ecuador	8-17-77	48,531
1974 Buick Electra 225	DeKalb, Illinois	8-18-77	51,778
1973 Chevrolet Impala	Delano, California	9-06-77	93,788
1975 Oldsmobile 98 Regency	Langhorn, Pennsylvania	9-17-77	55,000
1975 Oldsmobile Toronado	Hamilton, Ontario	10-10-77	47,585
1974 Oldsmobile Delta 88	Atchison County, Missouri	10-19-77	50,508
1975 Oldsmobile 98	Janesville Township, Wisconsin	10-23-77	51,382
1973 Chevrolet Impala	Boaz, Alabama	11-07-77	71,878
1974 Oldsmobile Toronado	Kingsport, Tennessee	11-09-77	46,436
1973 Chevrolet Impala	San Antonio, Texas	12-13-77	101,946
1975 Oldsmobile 98	Cass City, Michigan	1-15-78	42,322
1974 Oldsmobile Delta 88	Perry, Michigan	2-14-78	70,106
1975 Cadillac Eldorado	Boise, Idaho	4-21-78	51,549
1973 Chevrolet Impala	Los Angeles, California	4-27-78	72,409
1974 Cadillac Eldorado	Chicago, Illinois	7-22-78	44,102
1973 Chevrolet Impala	St. Louis County, Missouri	12-16-78	88,369

IIHS Favors Change In Side-Door Strength Standard

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) has expressed support for a proposed change in the federal side-door strength standard. The change was recently proposed by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to encourage vehicle manufacturers to "develop innovative designs" for improving occupant protection against side impacts.

In a notice of proposed rulemaking, NHTSA said the amendment would give manufacturers the option of leaving the seats in vehicles during compliance tests specified in Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (FMVSS) 214. The agency said the Volvo Corporation of America, which requested the option, has said it is developing an advanced side-impact protection system of which the vehicle seats are an essential part.

In the current compliance tests, the side doors of passenger cars must offer certain levels of crush resistance when subjected to specified levels of static force. NHTSA said it recognized when it first adopted the standard that during a crash, proper seat design can reduce the intrusion of side door structures into the passenger compartment. But it decided to require that the seats be removed for the tests so side-door strength alone could be determined.

NHTSA's proposed alternative requirements would mandate higher levels of crush resistance for vehicles tested with their seats. These would be set to assure a level of protection equal to or greater than that established by existing requirements, the agency said.

In comments filed in support of the proposal, IIHS noted that the Volvo design is based on a "recognition that the mass of the door is small compared to the masses of the struck and striking vehicles and therefore in order to reduce the dynamic response of the door to side impact it is necessary to transfer a large portion of the energy pulse from the door itself to the mass of the struck vehicle."

A NHTSA spokesman said the agency is in the process of evaluating comments from various parties and has not yet set a date for final action on its proposal.

39,000 Lives Might Have Been Saved *(Cont'd from page 1)*

for years – the denial to the American motoring public of a crash protection technology that not only has already been thoroughly researched and tested, but also has proved itself in hundreds of violent, real-world car collisions."

Replying to Eckhardt's request, William Haddon, Jr., M.D., Institute president, said that "Applying air bag effectiveness estimates to these real-world FARS data for, specifically, calendar years 1975, 1976, 1977, and 1978, we have been able to develop a general picture of the extent to which front-seat air bag protection, had it been available in all cars during those calendar years, would have reduced crash deaths in each of the 50 states." (See tables.)

In Eckardt's own state – Texas – the evidence was compelling: Out of 6,876 actual front-seat occupant fatalities in the four-year period, the Institute's analysis showed 2,828 might have been prevented with air bag protection.

Texas was second only to California in the actual front-seat death toll for the four-year period. In California 7,857 deaths were recorded in such situations. From that maximum figure the death toll ranged down to 198 for Rhode Island and 72 for the District of Columbia. For the California record, the Institute calculated that 2,889 persons died unnecessarily because of the lack of air bag protection. In Rhode Island, 87 lives might have been spared, and in the District of Columbia 30 might have lived had they been protected with air bags.

ACTUAL NUMBERS OF FRONT SEAT PASSENGER CAR OCCUPANT DEATHS

STATE	CALENDAR YEAR 1975	1976	1977	1978	1975-78 Combined
Alabama	529	561	622	639	2351
Alaska	51	49	46	53	199
Arizona	252	271	334	397	1254
Arkansas	279	242	273	283	1077
California	1688	1806	2074	2289	7857
Colorado	273	273	311	313	1170
Connecticut	223	212	238	203	876
Delaware	75	63	68	62	268
D.C.	18	17	19	18	72
Florida	730	814	876	1061	3481
Georgia	695	696	639	799	2829
Hawaii	81	77	79	109	346
Idaho	93	66	136	137	432
Illinois	1076	1088	1149	1127	4440
Indiana	484	454	562	492	1992
Iowa	400	416	342	330	1488
Kansas	284	300	294	305	1183
Kentucky	493	474	544	502	2013
Louisiana	498	461	456	497	1912
Maine	79	111	97	120	407
Maryland	359	296	345	331	1331
Massachusetts	444	424	327	459	1654
Michigan	939	1070	1058	1086	4153
Minnesota	385	424	384	470	1663
Mississippi	284	310	377	461	1432
Missouri	598	630	653	595	2476
Montana	134	130	158	121	543
Nebraska	189	208	174	181	752
Nevada	92	84	122	128	426
New Hampshire	82	92	79	97	350
New Jersey	566	541	576	588	2271
New Mexico	247	226	281	267	1021
New York	1129	1134	1082	1215	4560
North Carolina	845	760	739	813	3157
North Dakota	87	108	82	84	361
Ohio	992	1092	1040	1163	4287
Oklahoma	383	436	438	448	1705
Oregon	267	300	282	337	1186
Pennsylvania	1165	1160	1128	1066	4519
Rhode Island	58	56	57	27	198
South Carolina	446	439	495	502	1882
South Dakota	97	113	92	95	397
Tennessee	413	486	478	508	1885
Texas	1651	1620	1743	1862	6876
Utah	112	100	143	169	524
Vermont	79	68	64	59	270
Virginia	509	523	612	572	2216
Washington	412	431	500	525	1868
West Virginia	256	283	298	266	1103
Wisconsin	489	499	519	554	2061
Wyoming	86	107	100	93	386
ALL STATES	**22096**	**22601**	**23585**	**24878**	**93160**

(Cont'd on page 8)

ESTIMATED NUMBERS OF FRONT SEAT PASSENGER CAR OCCUPANT DEATHS THAT COULD HAVE BEEN PREVENTED BY AIR BAGS

STATE	CALENDAR YEAR 1975	1976	1977	1978	1975-78 Combined*
Alabama	266	217	235	238	956
Alaska	20	17	14	19	71
Arizona	69	88	112	138	407
Arkansas	113	96	121	142	472
California	532	662	819	876	2889
Colorado	84	78	97	99	358
Connecticut	100	84	99	88	371
Delaware	17	10	29	28	84
D.C.	7	7	9	7	30
Florida	280	313	324	401	1318
Georgia	312	277	240	325	1155
Hawaii	39	36	31	50	156
Idaho	30	24	50	37	141
Illinois	441	451	467	454	1814
Indiana	166	186	216	197	765
Iowa	162	138	151	149	600
Kansas	131	149	146	135	561
Kentucky	227	227	251	249	954
Louisiana	238	211	194	220	863
Maine	35	48	45	44	171
Maryland	156	160	181	163	660
Massachusetts	211	212	176	243	842
Michigan	305	342	347	374	1369
Minnesota	127	133	126	159	546
Mississippi	78	99	154	192	524
Missouri	272	252	288	251	1063
Montana	56	45	48	35	184
Nebraska	76	86	65	75	302
Nevada	45	28	49	46	168
New Hampshire	37	27	27	42	134
New Jersey	278	282	287	309	1156
New Mexico	89	96	112	109	406
New York	436	513	501	572	2021
North Carolina	338	305	274	330	1247
North Dakota	40	45	33	40	158
Ohio	444	493	466	501	1904
Oklahoma	166	168	174	199	707
Oregon	101	103	112	130	446
Pennsylvania	657	807	423	694	2582
Rhode Island	21	27	26	13	87
South Carolina	192	172	210	204	777
South Dakota	35	41	27	35	138
Tennessee	199	220	217	230	865
Texas	696	675	732	725	2828
Utah	37	35	57	64	193
Vermont	27	23	29	21	99
Virginia	211	242	276	249	978
Washington	143	157	171	197	667
West Virginia	89	102	141	136	467
Wisconsin	244	211	232	251	937
Wyoming	28	42	33	29	132
ALL STATES*	**9103**	**9462**	**9642**	**10516**	**38724**

*Totals do not add because of rounding.

Institute Asks Speed Limit On Cruise Control Devices

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, which earlier had endorsed a suggested requirement for speed-limiting devices for heavy trucks and buses, has proposed that a speed ceiling be required on passenger car "cruise control" equipment.

In a petition filed with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the Institute asked the agency to initiate rulemaking to assure that cruise controls "not be capable of operating at speeds in excess of the national legal limit of 55 miles per hour."

Cruise controls are offered as optional equipment on some car models and have become widely used. They are relatively simple devices that control an automobile engine's throttle adjustment so that a selected speed may be maintained without the use of the accelerator pedal. The equipment provides for a return to manual control when the operator steps on either the accelerator or the brake.

FEW CHANGES WOULD BE REQUIRED

Only minimal changes would have to be made in the design of the cruise control devices, the Institute explained, and normal operation would not be affected. "Such rulemaking would have no effect on passing ability, top speed, or engine speed," the petition pointed out, "which (as proved by the cruise controls that have been supplied for many years by vehicle manufacturers) can be controlled independently of such speed control devices. It would, however, reduce the ease and convenience of sustained operation at illegal speeds."

The Institute proposed that top speeds allowed by the cruise controls be fixed at 57-58 mph. "Setting the maximum just above the legal speed limit would recognize the effects of variations in tire tread and system accuracy on the actual speed, and thus would ensure that a cruising speed of 55 mph was possible in all cars," the petition explained.

Limiting speed is a "well-demonstrated, successful approach to reducing crashes, saving lives, and saving fuel," the Institute said, and pointed to secondary payoffs: "Tire life, engine wear, drive line wear, and oil consumption are all reduced during lower speed operation."

'IT'S IRRATIONAL AND DEADLY'

In a recent interview published in the *Miami Herald*, William Haddon, Jr., M.D., Institute president, commented on the Institute's interest in vehicle speeds. "We have laws saying it's illegal for a driver to go over 55," he said, "but there are no laws saying it's illegal for a manufacturer to produce vehicles that go at such speeds. It's irrational and deadly."

Speaking of the Institute's petition, Haddon added that the government should not permit speed control devices, such as cruise controls, to have settings that can only be used to maintain illegal speeds.

The Institute has supported a proposal by Trailways, Inc., an interstate bus operator, that NHTSA require installation of speed limiting devices on heavy trucks and buses to prevent them from violating the 55 mph limit. (See *Status Report,* Vol. 14, No. 11, July 13, 1979.) At a meeting held by the National Highway Safety Advisory Committee, Haddon urged such rulemaking as a means of speed limit enforcement. He observed that "*every* motor vehicle right now has a designed-in top speed – one chosen by its manufacturer. The real policy question is, 'what should that top speed be?'" The advisory committee agreed to recommend immediate research into the issue by the Department of Transportation.

Report Examines Role Of Suspended Drivers In Crashes

Drivers with suspended or revoked licenses (S/R drivers) are involved in more crashes, particularly fatal crashes, than would be expected when compared to the general driving population. This is the main conclusion of a report by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration in cooperation with the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators.

Ideally, S/R drivers should be involved in no crashes, since it is illegal for them to drive under any circumstances. In spite of this sanction, well over half of the S/R drivers continue to drive, according to the report.

Further major findings of the study are:

- The S/R driver problem and the drinking driver problem are interrelated. For example, in 1977, 39 percent of the S/R drivers involved in fatal crashes had been drinking, whereas only 24 percent of all fatal crash drivers were alcohol-impaired.

- A much larger percentage of male drivers are S/R than are female drivers. Male S/R drivers, age 20 to 34, are over-represented in fatal crashes by about 50 percent, which makes them a prime target for "driver control activities."

TAGS PROJECT CITED

The report concluded that a more effective means of coping with S/R drivers who continue to drive must be found. One recommendation was that the probability of S/R offenders being detected should be increased. A possible means suggested for accomplishing this is though approaches similar to the Maryland TAGS project. This project, initially funded in part by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety and conducted by the Maryland State Police, demonstrated that the use of "rapid computer-based mass screening" of motor vehicle tag numbers could effectively detect suspended and revoked drivers, as well as other violators, such as those driving stolen cars. (See *Status Report*, Vol. 13, No. 7, May 31, 1978.)

According to the report's authors, the data are insufficient to clearly define the extent of the S/R driver problem. This lack of data is caused by incomplete or inaccurate court or police reporting, lack of uniform record-keeping among different jurisdictions, and failure of jurisdictions to answer requests for data.

More information is also needed to determine the initial charges filed against drivers. For example, a driver whose license is suspended for financial reasons is currently lumped with those who have moving traffic violations.

Those interested in copies of "Involvement of Suspended/Revoked Drivers in Traffic Crashes" (DOT HS 804 104) should contact the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

Correction

"The Moped Report" referred to in *Status Report*, Vol. 14, No. 12, Aug. 8, 1979, was produced by the Ohio State Department of Education, rather than the Ohio Traffic Safety Education Center as reported.

Onward To The Tinfoil Car

An American car and a loaded shopping cart met head-on in a parking lot near East Stroudsburg, Pa., a few weeks ago. It was hardly a contest.

Kathleen Kauderer reported to the consumer affairs division of the Department of Transportation that she turned her back on the shopping cart while unloading some groceries and it rolled down a slope in the parking lot and hit a Plymouth Duster in the left door.

The final score: Duster, $84.80 damage; shopping cart, no damage, and Kauderer's eggs survived without a crack.

Combine that sad little tale from the *Insurance Institute for Highway Safety* with the following:

The U.S. Senate, with little debate and on a voice vote, has acted to cut back on the federal requirement that a bumper be able to withstand a 5-mile per hour crash without damage to the car. The Senate voted that a bumper should only have to withstand a nudge of 2.5-miles per hour.

This action came on the heels of an expensive study by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration which concluded that the 5-mile per hour bumper requirement would save motorists approximately $400 million more in repair costs than the lower standard.

The 2.5-mile per hour bumper standard was applied with a straight face to a bill called the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act. The House has yet to be heard from on the matter.

If the current trend toward tin-foil cars continues, by 1985 parking lots might have to provide ropes to keep new cars from blowing away.

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On The Inside

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