

## General Motors Plans Securiflex Windshield Test in Rental Fleets

Federal safety officials have granted General Motors permission to equip 2,500 automobiles for rental fleets with anti-lacerative windshields to test their durability in use.

The auto maker has shipped regular laminated production windshields to Saint-Gobain Vitrage in Europe in order that the Securiflex "inner guard," a film of clear plastic, be applied and the windshields returned for installation in General Motors cars. The "inner guard" is expected to reduce painful and disfiguring lacerations in crashes.

Since 1968 a federal standard (FMVSS 205) has required that vehicles manufactured for use in the United States have windshields of glass laminated around a layer of plastic to provide penetration resistance. The standard also established an abrasion test for the glass, principally to ensure that road grit and windshield wipers do not lead to deterioration in visibility. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) officials have interpreted the standard to mean both the exterior and interior surfaces must pass the abrasion test. As a result, the Securiflex process has been blocked from U.S. use for years because the inner surface which self-heals minor scratches, does not meet the agency's abrasion requirements.

More than 2 1/2 years ago, the Securiflex makers petitioned for a change in the windshield standard so that their product, which has had much use in Europe, could be accepted for U.S. vehicles. (See *Status Report*, Vol. 15, No. 13, Aug. 14, 1980.) Early in 1981, NHTSA issued an advance notice of proposed rulemaking on the matter. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety endorsed the Securiflex petition and later that year urged NHTSA to eliminate the abrasion test for inner surfaces immediately. (See *Status Report*, Vol. 16, No. 6, April 27, 1981.) NHTSA refused the petition.

General Motors told NHTSA it is interested in evaluating "the efficacy and practicality" of the European type windshield. "We seek actual production and field experience under a wide variety of North American conditions," the company told Raymond Peck, NHTSA administrator. "Such an appraisal can help determine whether any haze caused by the surface abrasion that occurs in normal use is a safety concern, and whether production difficulties exist."

Because of concerns over exemptions granted under the Safety Act, General Motors emphasized it was not asking an exemption but, instead, "seeks the administrator's assistance in suggesting the most appropriate action that will permit a timely implementation of the field evaluation described above."

*(Cont'd on page 7)*

## NHTSA Proposes Utility Vehicle Warning Sticker

All utility vehicles would have to carry a warning sticker cautioning operators that they handle differently than passenger cars, under a rule proposed by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

At present only the AMC CJ Jeeps are required to carry such a warning, and that was the result of a consent order signed by the Jeep makers and the Federal Trade Commission. (See *Status Report*, Vol. 16, No. 19, Dec. 9, 1981.)

The NHTSA requirement would apply equally to all multipurpose passenger vehicles which have special features for off-road operation. NHTSA mentioned as examples of this class of vehicle the AMC Jeeps, Chevrolet Blazer, Ford Bronco, Plymouth Trail Duster, Dodge Ram Charger, VW Thing, Toyota Land Cruiser, and the GMC Jimmy.

Warning stickers would carry this or a similar message under the proposed rule: "This is a multipur-

*(Cont'd on page 7)*

## NHTSA Funds Are Cut 10 Percent From '82

In December, the 97th Congress appropriated \$74 million for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) research and operations programs this fiscal year, a 10 percent reduction from the 1982 spending level.

Separately, Congress provided \$100 million in contract authority for the agency's Section 402 state and community highway safety grant program. (See article, page 3.)

Under provisions contained in H.R. 7019, the Department of Transportation appropriations bill for fiscal 1983, Congress allocated the following amounts for NHTSA's research and operations:

**Rulemaking Programs** - These will receive \$5.5 million in fiscal 1983, compared to \$5.985 in 1982. The rulemaking office develops and recommends safety performance test procedures, devices, test criteria, and standards for vehicles and equipment.

Since 1981 this activity has been directed primarily at reviewing existing standards with an eye toward "deregulating" where possible. In addition, the rulemaking office is responsible for the agency's new car assessment program.

**Enforcement Programs** - This activity is geared toward ensuring manufacturer compliance with existing motor vehicle safety standards. It also investigates possible safety-related defects and orders recalls. Congress appropriated \$9.6 million for fiscal 1983, compared to \$9.705 in 1982, for this activity.

**Highway Safety Programs** - For fiscal 1983, Congress appropriated \$9.3 million, compared to \$10.5 million in 1982. The primary purpose of this program is to provide salaries and expenses for headquarters and regional staff who help the states run their own highway safety programs. Five million dollars of these funds were set aside for salaries and expenses out of this program. In addition, \$1.3 million was designated for alcohol-related programs and \$1.2 million for occupant restraint usage programs. A total of \$500,000 was set aside for developing improved countermeasures

### **Congress Curbs NHTSA Belt-Use Program**

Congress has directed the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to refrain from spending any more funds on the agency's belt-use campaign until certain conditions are met.

The directive was contained in the conference report on H.R. 7019, the Department of Transportation 1983 appropriations legislation, which was signed into law December 18.

"The conferees remain concerned about the effectiveness of the \$27 million program developed by NHTSA to increase safety belt usage in the United States," the report stated. "Over the past decade, NHTSA has undertaken numerous efforts at significant cost to promote safety belt usage. These efforts have had no lasting effect."

The report noted that a General Accounting Office (GAO) draft report on the program has disclosed NHTSA failed to conduct a cost-benefit analysis of its seat belt program to determine whether the benefits will outweigh program costs. GAO also has asserted that past campaigns cited by NHTSA as evidence that this new program can work "offer little insight into the potential success of this program," the conferees noted.

Two conditions must be met before further expenditures can be undertaken:

- NHTSA must develop a program plan which specifies what rate of seat belt usage it expects to achieve and when. It must also estimate how much it will cost to maintain belt use at that rate.
- There must be a government-wide mandatory safety belt use policy for federal employees to set an example for private sector organizations.

In floor debate on the measure, Rep. John Dingell, Chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, said he also was concerned about the cost-effectiveness of the belt-use program. Nonetheless, he said, he was also concerned that the report indicates that both the House and Senate appropriations committees have to approve NHTSA's written submissions before the agency has the power to obligate additional funds for the program. "Committee approval of this nature is akin to a committee veto which, I note, is not a recognized practice under the Constitution and House rules," Dingell said.

and \$1.3 million for state program management assistance.

**Research and Analysis** - Some \$34 million was set aside for this program category, compared to \$35.4 million in 1982. Of those funds, \$6.6 million was for staff salaries and expenses; \$10 million for passenger vehicle research, \$350,000 for heavy truck research, \$2.1 million for highway-related safety research, and \$15 million for the agency's data collection and analysis conducted by the National Center for Statistics and Analysis. Congress also directed that \$2 million be spent on research and analysis conducted by the Transportation Systems Center in Cambridge, Mass.

**General Administration** - For the only category to receive an increase, Congress appropriated \$15.6 million, compared to \$13.3 million in 1982. Congress also directed the agency to begin providing a separate line item for the office of the administrator beginning with the budget submission for fiscal 1984.

## Highway Funds Bill Sets New Road Safety Guidelines

On January 6, President Reagan signed into law a highway revenue and spending measure with significant highway safety implications.

The Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1982, more popularly known as the "gas tax" law, contains five titles. The first revises authorization for appropriations for the interstate and federal-aid highway systems through 1990 and limits annual obligations through 1986.

The second title deals with specific highway safety issues, the third deals with mass transit, the fourth is concerned with commercial trucks, and title 5 raises the gasoline tax to nine cents a gallon from four cents. It gradually increases "user fees" on heavy trucks throughout 1984-85. The tax increases will provide additional revenues for the Highway Trust Fund out of which most highway-related programs are funded. This section also extends the Highway Trust Fund through 1988.

Among the most significant safety-related portions of the new law are the following:

- In a significant policy shift, Congress has begun moving most special highway safety construction programs such as pedestrian walkways, bicycle paths, and skid accident reduction into a single category allocated out of the general federal-aid apportionment allotted each state.

Total obligations allowable for federal-aid highways and "highway safety construction" will be \$12.1 billion in fiscal 1983, \$12.8 billion in 1984, \$13.6 billion in 1985, and \$14.5 billion in 1986. About 40 percent of those funds must be spent on what are known as 4R projects: resurfacing, restoring, rehabilitating, and reconstructing existing highways. The share actually spent on safety construction will be determined by each state.

- Bridge replacement and rehabilitation projects will receive up to \$1.6 billion in fiscal 1983, \$1.7 billion in 1984, \$1.8 billion in 1985, and \$2 billion in 1986.

- Hazard elimination projects — which may include removal of hazards on roads off the federal-aid system — will receive a \$200 million allocation in the years 1983-86.

- Section 402 programs, state and community highway safety grants administered by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, were authorized to receive \$100 million in 1985-86. Two percent of those funds must be spent on encouraging seat belt use and at least 20 percent must be spent on enforcement of the 55 mph speed limit.

- Congress specifically reiterated its determination that 4R projects receiving federal aid must be conducted in accordance with standards that not only preserve and extend the service life of highways, but enhance highway safety. In a rebuke to the Federal Highway Administration for declaring safety improvements of secondary importance on 4R projects and for adopting a new rule relinquishing its standard-setting role to the states (see *Status Report*, Vol. 17, No. 10, July 22, 1982), Congress ordered the National Academy of Sciences to review the safety cost-effectiveness of already-existing construction and reconstruction standards. Then, in cooperation with the National Transportation Safety Board, the Congressional Budget Office, and the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials, the Academy is to suggest the "most appropriate minimum standards" to apply to 4R projects.

Within 90 days of receipt of the study, the Department of Transportation (DOT) would be required to forward the study along with its own recommendations to the Congress for approval.

- Congress also ordered a National Academy of Sciences study of the benefits of the 55 mph speed limit to be completed early next year.

- Annual safety performance reports which evaluate the relative safety records of the states must be submitted by the DOT to Congress. The purpose of this section is to improve state data collection and reporting on deaths and injuries on all highways.

(Cont'd on next page)

## HLDI Lists Leaders In Collision Losses

General Motors' 4-door Oldsmobile Delta 88 had the best collision coverage loss experience among high-volume 1982 automobiles, and the Mazda RX-7 the worst, the Highway Loss Data Institute (HLDI) has reported.

In its latest research report on insurance losses relating to collision coverages for 1980-82 cars, vans, pickups, and utility vehicles, the research group said eight of the ten 1982 autos with the best collision coverage loss experience were either 4-door models or station wagons and all but one were domestic models.

The Honda Accord 4-door was the only import that appeared on the HLDI "10 best" list.

The research was based on collision coverage and loss data supplied by 11 major insurers.

Of the five high-volume 1982 cars with the best collision coverage loss experience, the Delta 88 had a relative average loss payment per insured vehicle year of 55, some 45 percent below the result for all 1982 models combined. (The value 100 represents the average for all cars of each model year.) The Ford Escort station wagon ranked second, with a relative average loss payment per insured vehicle year of 61, followed by the Chevrolet Cavalier station wagon at 64. The Honda Accord ranked fourth, at 73, and the Oldsmobile Cutlass was fifth, at 75.

Of the 10 cars with the worst collision coverage experience, six were sports or specialty models and the rest were regular 2-door models. Among the high-volume models, the Mazda RX-7 had a relative average loss payment per insured vehicle year of 197,

nearly twice the average. The Chevrolet Camaro had a relative average loss payment per insured vehicle year of 180, followed by the Ford Mustang at 140, the Toyota Celica at 135, and the 2-door Datsun 210 at 132.

Copies of the report, "Insurance Losses, Collision Coverages for Passenger Cars, Vans, Pickups, and Utility Vehicles," may be obtained by asking for HLDI research report R82-2. Write the Communications Dept., Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, Watergate 600, Washington, D.C. 20037.

## Highway Funds Bill Sets New Road Safety Guidelines

(Cont'd from Page 3)

- Trucks will get heavier, longer, and wider. Passage of the appropriations bill will make it possible for trucks operating on the interstates and any other "qualifying" federal-aid highway to be as wide as commercial buses — 102 inches — up from a 96-inch limitation.

Under the authorization measure, states will not be permitted to bar trucks weighing up to 80,000 pounds from operating on the interstate system within their borders, and they may permit even heavier trucks. In addition, states cannot bar trailers and semi-trailers under 48 feet in length and twin trailer lengths under 28 feet for each unit. No state may bar twin trailers (truck tractor with two trailing units) from the interstate and primary system within its borders.

- DOT has been ordered to report on the benefits and costs of establishing a national intercity truck route network for a special class of longer combination (twin-trailers) commercial trucks with an overall length of up to 110 feet.

**Relative Average Loss Payments Per Insured Vehicle Year  
for 1982 Model Year Cars With the Best and Worst  
Collision Coverage Loss Experience\***

|   | Best                |       |       | Worst            |       |       |
|---|---------------------|-------|-------|------------------|-------|-------|
|   | Model               | Dr.   | Value | Model            | Dr.   | Value |
| HIGH VOLUME<br>(At least 1% of<br>total exposure) | Oldsmobile Delta 88 | 4 Dr. | 55    | Mazda RX-7       | Sp.   | 197   |
|   | Ford Escort         | S.W.  | 61    | Chevrolet Camaro | Sp.   | 180   |
|   | Chevrolet Cavalier  | S.W.  | 64    | Ford Mustang     | 2 Dr. | 140   |
|   | Honda Accord        | 4 Dr. | 73    | Toyota Celica    | 2 Dr. | 135   |
|   | Oldsmobile Cutlass  | 4 Dr. | 75    | Datsun 210       | 2 Dr. | 132   |

\*100 represents the average for all 1982 cars.

# NHTSA Study Finds Three Utility Vehicles Most Dangerous

Jeep CJ-5, CJ-7, and the Toyota Land Cruiser are involved in single-vehicle fatal rollover crashes more often than other leading utility vehicles, an analysis by a National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) researcher indicates.

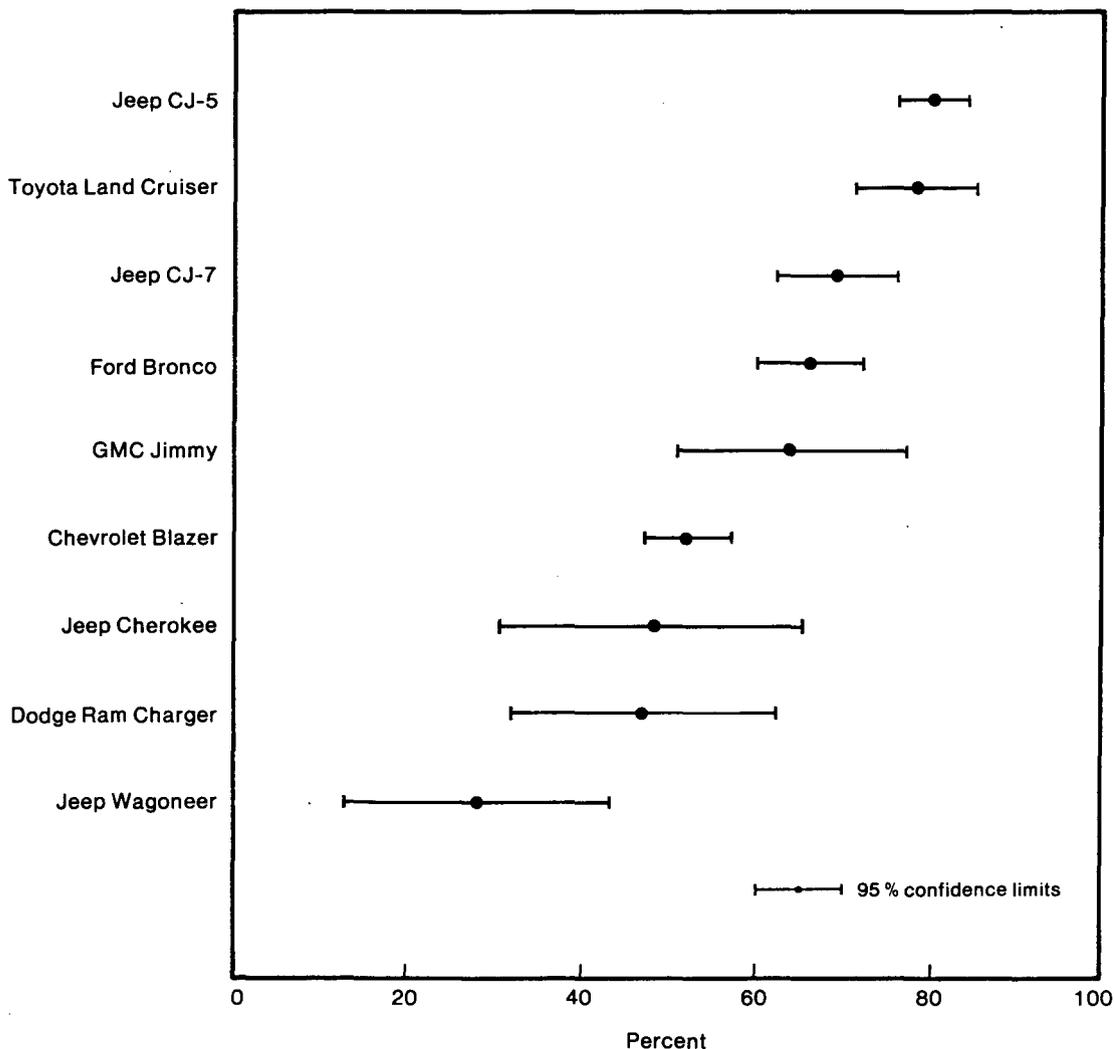
The study has just been released, nearly a year after its preparation by a researcher in NHTSA's National Center for Statistics and Analysis. The study of the single-vehicle fatal crashes involving utility vehi-

cles in 1978-80 reports that there is considerable difference in the rollover experience of various utility vehicles, with the CJ-5, CJ-7, and Toyota Land Cruiser having the worst experience.

NHTSA did not specifically refer to this analysis last month when it proposed rulemaking to require warning stickers for all utility vehicles. (See article on page 1.) Nor did it cite a University of North Carolina study which reported that the CJ-5 was much more hazardous than the Chevrolet Blazer and pre-1978 Ford Bronco. In announcing the rulemaking, the agency cited a study from the Highway Safety Research Institute of the University of Michigan that found that utility vehicles roll over at a rate at least five times higher than that for passenger cars. (See *Status Report*, Vol. 15, No. 7, May 6, 1980.) *(Cont'd on page 6)*

FIGURE 1

Percent of Single Vehicle Fatal Crashes Involving Rollover



## NHTSA Study Finds Three Utility Vehicles Most Dangerous

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The Jeep CJ-5 and Toyota Land Cruiser were found to be involved in the highest percentage of fatal crashes involving rollovers of any of the utility vehicles — 80 percent and 78 percent, respectively (Figure 1).

When the numbers of fatal rollover crashes are compared with the years of registration for each utility vehicle type, the records of the CJ-5, Land Cruiser, and CJ-7 were not significantly different (Figure 2). However, the study found significant differences between both the CJ-5 and Land Cruiser and all other vehicle types.

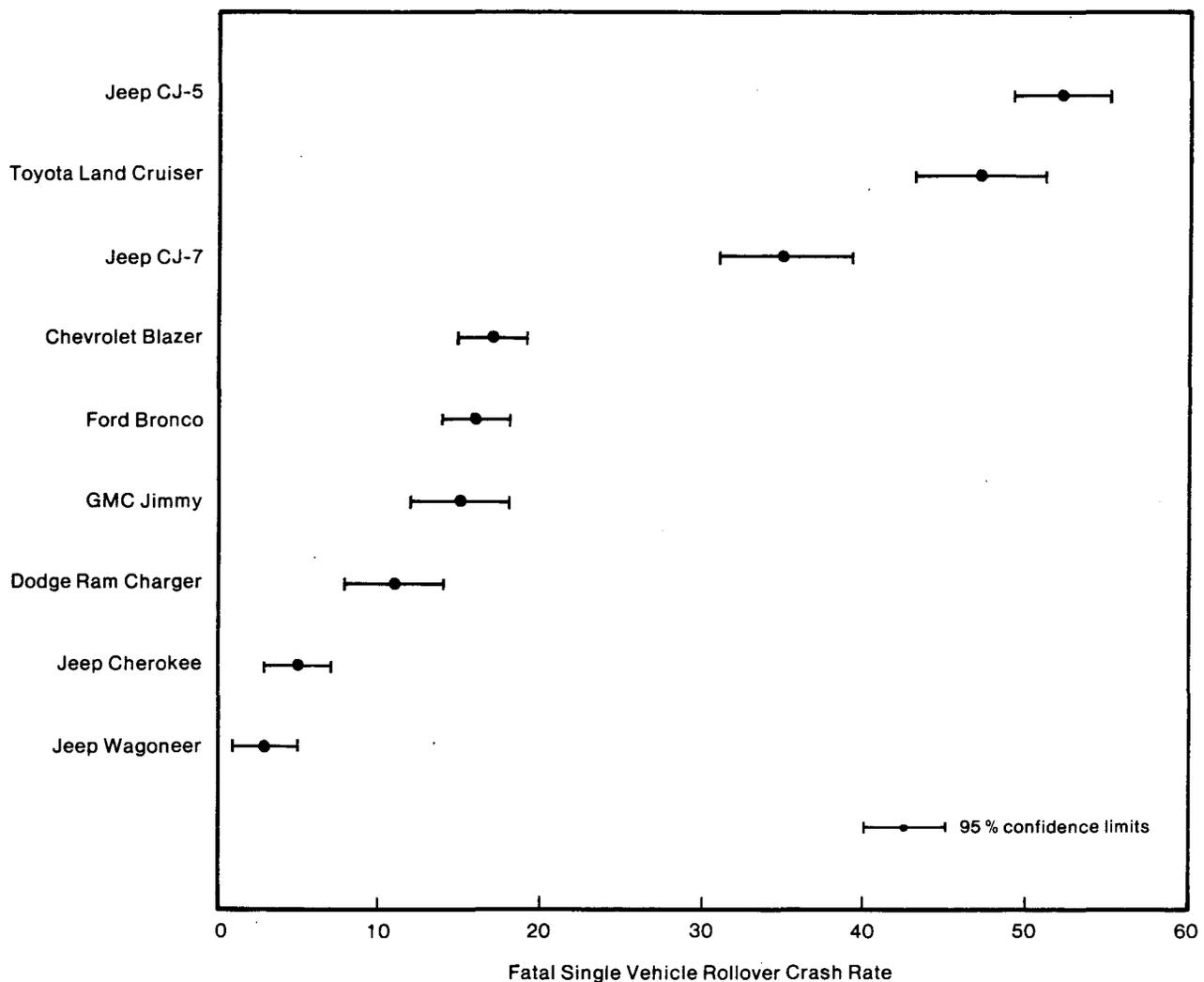
The study reports that 85-86 percent of the fatalities resulting from crashes of CJ-5 or Land Cruisers involve a rollover.

When rollover fatalities were expressed in terms of vehicle-years of registration for each vehicle type, the CJ-5, Land Cruiser, and CJ-7 were found to have a significantly worse experience than all other utility vehicles.

“Given a fatal accident involving a utility vehicle, the Jeep CJ-5 and Toyota Land Cruiser are more likely to have rolled over than any other vehicle type,” the study concludes. “Occupant fatalities resulting from utility vehicle fatal accidents which involve a rollover occur more frequently” in Jeep CJ-5, CJ-7, and the Toyota Land Cruiser “as opposed to the other vehicle types.”

FIGURE 2

Fatal Single Vehicle Rollover Crashes per 100,000 Registered Vehicle Years



## **Defect Study Rejected**

In proposing rulemaking to require warning stickers on all utility vehicles, NHTSA reported that it had recently rejected a petition to open a defect investigation into the performance of the Jeep CJ-5.

"The agency was unable to find that design characteristic[s] of the subject vehicle alone warrant, based on evidence before the agency, opening of such a proceeding," NHTSA said in its *Federal Register* notice.

In a letter to a Massachusetts attorney rejecting the defect investigation, NHTSA blamed the overwhelming majority of Jeep crashes on factors such as speeding, reckless driving, and alcohol and said, "the Jeep CJ-5 appears to be less forgiving of incautious driving or unfavorable operating conditions than may be other vehicles."

NHTSA explained that it considered a recent decision of the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) in a study of complaints about the CJ-5 Jeeps. In that case the FTC and the Jeep Corporation signed a consent order requiring the vehicle maker to "cease and desist" from alleged deceptive advertising practices and to issue warning stickers with new Jeep CJ vehicles warning users that the Jeeps handle differently from passenger cars. (See *Status Report*, Vol. 16, No. 19, Dec. 9, 1981.)

## **NHTSA Proposes Utility Vehicle Warning Sticker**

**(Cont'd from Page 1)**

pose passenger vehicle which will handle and maneuver differently from an ordinary passenger car in driving conditions which may occur on streets and highways and off the road. As with other vehicles of this type, if you make sharp turns or abrupt maneuvers, especially at high speeds, you may lose control and crash. You should read driving guidelines and instructions in the Owner's Manual, and WEAR YOUR SEATBELTS AT ALL TIMES."

Similar warnings are proposed to be included in the owner's manual, emphasizing: "If at all possible, avoid sharp turning maneuvers. As with other vehicles of this type, failure to operate this vehicle correctly may result in loss of control or an accident."

In a *Federal Register* notice of the proposed rulemaking December 30, NHTSA blamed problems

with the utility vehicles on their operators' lack of understanding of their handling characteristics, particularly on paved roads. The agency acknowledged that research indicates that "utility vehicles are disproportionately more highly represented in rollover accidents than are passenger cars."

NHTSA singled out one study for comment in the notice, research sponsored by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety and conducted by the Highway Safety Research Institute of the University of Michigan. That study reported that utility vehicles roll over at a rate "at least five times higher than that experienced by the average passenger car," the agency said. (See *Status Report*, Vol. 15, No. 7, May 6, 1980.) The same research indicated that utility vehicle occupants are more likely to be killed in a rollover crash than are occupants of passenger cars.

The warning stickers proposed by NHTSA would be required by amendments to the agency's Consumer Information Regulations. NHTSA has called for public comment on the proposal by February 14. Comments should be addressed to Docket No. 32-20; Notice 1, Docket Section, Room 5109, Nassif Building, 400 Seventh St., S.W., Washington, D.C. 20590.

## **General Motors Plans Securiflex Windshield Test in Rental Fleets**

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"Under this limited and special circumstance," Peck responded, "the agency can firmly state that it would not enforce the abrasion requirement as it now stands since it appears not to be appropriate for technology like the Securiflex windshield. That technology has been developed since the standard was originally issued. Equally important, the agency notes that current research data indicate that Securiflex windshields do indeed have great potential for reducing lacerative injuries in accidents."

Peck added that NHTSA intends to proceed with rulemaking "in the near future" to make changes in FMVSS 205 that are appropriate to allow new glazing materials such as Securiflex.

General Motors had stated in its application to NHTSA that the issue of abrasion resistance was primarily a matter of commercial acceptability to the company. "Accordingly, we don't believe the agency should feel constrained to delay rulemaking or reconsideration of its interpretation pending the outcome of GM's field evaluation," the auto maker told NHTSA.

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# Status Report

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