

**STATUS REPORT**

FEDERAL ROLE  
IN  
HIGHWAY SAFETY

**INSURANCE INSTITUTE for HIGHWAY SAFETY**

Watergate Office Building  
2600 Virginia Avenue, N. W.  
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**VOLPE GETS COUNCIL'S 'PRIORITIES' REPORT**

The National Highway Advisory Committee has urged Transportation Secretary John Volpe and private sector safety organizations to cooperate in convening a "continuing series" of "state-level highway safety conferences under the co-sponsorship of the President, the Governors, and the private sector."

The recommendation was one of three "priorities" that the Committee, in a recent report to the Secretary, said should be given DOT attention. The other two were:

-- "Establishment of improved public support and public information capability for the National Highway Safety Bureau, which, among other tasks, would work with the private sector and state officials." This was in expectation of the Bureau's reorganization as an independent unit reporting directly to the Secretary.

-- "Emphasis for now in national highway safety campaigns on need for stronger measures aimed at problem drinker drivers." This recommendation grew out of the findings of DOT's 1968 Report to Congress on Alcohol and Highway Safety.

The "priorities" were developed when the Advisory Committee's public support subcommittee met in December with leaders of S. T. A. T. E. S. (Safety Through Action to Enlist Support) to explore plans for implementing the 16 national highway safety standards at the state level. Discussed -- but not necessarily resolved -- at the meeting were problems which face the enactment and implementation of standards at the state level ". . . due to budget limitations, political resistance or (lack of) support from state organizations," the Committee told Secretary Volpe in its report.

During the meeting, the report disclosed, the S. T. A. T. E. S. organization was scored on two points -- its lack of ". . . national-level input of technical information on standards adapted for legislative as well as local public use," and failure to attain "co-ordinated leadership state to state." Similar criticisms, it was noted, were made of S. T. A. T. E. S. in a DOT-commissioned report by Dudley-Anderson-Yutzky which assessed the effectiveness of private organization and public agency attempts to win public support

for state legislative and administrative steps to launch or improve highway safety programs under the national standards.

It is understood that Secretary Volpe has asked NHSB Director Douglas Toms to develop plans for implementing the "priorities." The S. T. A. T. E. S. leadership has been asked by the Bureau to take whatever action it believes is "appropriate" toward furthering the recommendations.

### BUMPER 'DISCUSSION PAPER' ASSESSED

On April 2, the National Highway Safety Bureau will find out whether its so-called "discussion paper" -- actually, a proposed federal safety standard -- on auto bumpers is going to be a controversial item.

That's the day that the Bureau will hold its open meeting to hear private sector comments on the discussion paper, as well as on broad questions of bumper design and adequacy that may go beyond the scope of the paper. (Details of the planned meeting were reported in the March 3 issue of Status Report.)

If auto manufacturers are unwilling or unable to meet the paper's requirements, the April 2 meeting will give them an opportunity to offer arguments against it. Bumpers now generally in use on automobiles sold in the marketplace are not believed capable of meeting the proposed requirements.

The paper specifies a unique "pendulum test" in which a mass equal to that of the automobile being tested is swung against its bumper so as to simulate a five mile per hour crash. Force of impact of the pendulum is concentrated at the head of a protruding "bump" of one-half inch radius on the otherwise vertical face of the 16-inch wide pendulum. Impacts are required at measured points across the entire face of both the front and rear bumpers of the automobile being tested, perpendicular and at 45 degrees with the center line of the automobile.

A vehicle is considered to have passed the test if:

-- No portion of the vehicle makes contact with any of the vertical surfaces of the pendulum impact face. (The "bump" on the pendulum is not part of its vertical surfaces.)

-- The vehicle's lamps, reflective devices and "associated equipment" incur no damage or displacement "so as to affect their function and/or exceed the as-installed adjustment capability specified by the vehicle's manufacturer."

-- The vehicle's hood and trunk latch systems and the fuel, cooling, and exhaust systems experience no damage that impairs their "installed operational performance."

According to testimony presented in October, 1969, by a General Motors Corp. official during the Senate Antitrust and Monopoly Subcommittee hearings into auto repair problems, GM bumpers now are made to withstand a 2.8 mile per hour blow from the hammer-like pendulum approved for such tests by the Society of Automotive Engineers.

## NHSB COMPLETES DEALER INFO SURVEY

The National Highway Safety Bureau has completed its nationwide survey to determine if automobile dealers are making consumer information available to the public as required by DOT's motor vehicle safety regulation on consumer information.

Results of the NHSB survey, initiated in early February, were made public at a meeting of the National Motor Vehicle Safety Advisory Council's consumer safety committee. The survey results indicate a marked improvement in compliance when compared to results of similar surveys conducted earlier in the year by Status Report and by Ralph Nader.

NHSB had asked regional federal highway administrators and state governors' safety representatives to check automobile dealers in their areas for compliance with consumer information regulations. Replies were received from 43 states, the District of Columbia, and seven FHWA region offices. (States from which replies had not been received were Delaware, Illinois, Iowa, New Mexico, South Dakota, Montana and Texas.)

The survey covered 1,486 dealerships and indicated that 1,238 (83.4 per cent) had consumer data available on request, 27 (1.8 per cent) actually had the data on display, 90 (6 per cent) dealers were aware of the requirements but did not have the information available and 131 (8.8 per cent) had no knowledge of the requirements.

In a related survey to determine the extent of industry participation in the dissemination of consumer safety information, NHSB queried manufacturers: "What steps have you taken, or do you suggest, to get dealer cooperation on disseminating this information?"

Foreign manufacturers' replies generally reflected more aggressive methods than their American counterparts in making the information available to the public. Of nine foreign manufacturers replying, four either required or suggested that information be posted in dealer showrooms. Domestic manufacturers seemed to be taking a more passive role in dissemination of the material, supplying the information only on customer demand or having a copy of the information accompany each car.

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**MINI-CARS MIGHT FACE STANDARDS** -- After more than three years of exemption from federal motor vehicle safety standards, vehicles having a curb weight of 1,000 pounds or less soon may be subject to the standards if a current NHSB proposal takes effect. The recently-published proposal would extend the standards to such cars effective January 1, 1971.

The "mini-cars" were originally exempted because, in the words of an NHSB statement, "It was the belief . . . that manufacturers of these smaller vehicles would, at that time, face especially difficult problems in bringing them into conformity with the standards. But now, according to Bureau director Douglas W. Toms, further delay in applying the standards to the small cars might result in an "unreasonable and intolerable risk to the motoring public."

According to the 1969 edition of the authoritative World Car Catalogue, five automobiles currently are being manufactured which have a dry weight of less than 1,000 pounds. A sixth, the domestically-made King Midget, was not listed. Only three of the listed automobiles have a curb weight of less than 1,000 pounds: the Dinang D-200, manufactured in Argentina; the Japanese Subaru 360, and the Japanese Suzuki Fronte 360.

At the time the initial federal motor vehicle safety standards become effective in 1967, there were two makes of automobiles being sold in the U. S. which had curb weights of less than 1,000 pounds: the Subaru and the King Midget. Subaru currently is introducing a heavier model in the U. S. and the King Midget is produced "infrequently," according to the Wall Street Journal.

NHSB-contracted crash tests have established, the Bureau said, that "the energy exchange in a collision between two vehicles will result in more disastrous consequences for the lighter of the vehicles." The tests were conducted with the Subaru and the King Midget in 1968, and films of the controlled crashes were released at that time to the public. According to a NHSB spokesman there are no plans to resume tests of such automobiles at this time.

The Bureau has set April 24 as the cut-off date for comments on the proposal.

**STANDARDS FOR RETREADS** -- NHSB says it intends by mid-1971 to extend its tire safety standards to include retreaded tires used on passenger cars. Currently its tire safety standards apply only to new pneumatic passenger car tires. But because "retreaded tires are exposed to the same road conditions as new tires and should meet the same federal standards," the Bureau said in a release, it is proposing to broaden them to include retreads effective August 1, 1971.

During meetings on an earlier "advance notice" of the proposal, the release said, representatives of new tire and tire retreading interests stated that retreaded tires could meet requirements of a standard similar to Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard No. 109.

Comments on the proposed standard may be submitted before May 4, 1970, to the National Highway Safety Bureau, Attention: Rules Docket, Room 4223A, Federal Highway Administration, Department of Transportation, 400 7th Street, S. W., Washington, D. C. 20591.

**ROAD LOSS FILMS RELEASED** -- Two films involving highway loss causes and countermeasures have recently been made available.

One is, "Low Speed Car Crash Costs," a 20-minute color film depicting a series of low-speed impact tests run by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety on four 1969 standard automobiles to determine resulting repair costs. The film, narrated by Institute president William Haddon, Jr., M. D., discusses the role, in dollar terms, of such losses

in the overall property damage losses on the highways. It incorporates film of the Institute's entire 1969 crash test series. Information concerning loan or purchase of the film, which is priced at \$105, can be obtained from Al Thomasson, Communications Department, Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, 2600 Virginia Ave., N. W., Washington, D. C. 20037.

The second is, "Times 25," a half-hour documentary produced by the ABC-TV affiliate, KGO-TV, in San Francisco, California, which describes in detail the heavy drinker who drives and the highway hazard problems he generates. Included in the film are penetrating interviews of leading authorities on the abusive drinking-driving problem. Information concerning loan or purchase of the film, which is priced at \$225, may be obtained from the California Traffic Safety Foundation, 564 Market Street, San Francisco, Calif. 94104.

**SMOKING ON BUSES "HAZARDOUS"** -- Ralph Nader believes that smoking on buses is not only annoying, but hazardous -- strongly enough, in fact, that he has petitioned the Department of Transportation to do something about it.

Smoking on buses creates a fire hazard, interferes with a driver's ability to safely operate a bus by reducing his efficiency, and generates "potentially dangerous concentrations of carbon monoxide in the interior of buses," Nader contended in a petition seeking a DOT rule outlawing the practice.

In response to Nader's petition, the Federal Highway Administration is inviting views of interested persons on the "potential safety hazards created by the smoking of cigarettes, cigars and pipes on buses."

Comments should be sent to Acting Director, Kenneth L. Pierson, Bureau of Motor Carrier Safety, Federal Highway Administration, Washington, D. C. 20591 by April 17, 1970.

**COMPETITION IN SAFETY?** -- Would more competition mean less cost to car buyers for safety features? A Michigan senator thinks so.

In a speech to the New York Consumer Assembly, Sen. Philip Hart (D-Mich.) chairman of the Antitrust and Monopoly Subcommittee, asserted that some government actions can "hamper competition and increase prices." For instance:

"Requirements that the safety accessories -- such as seat belts and headrests -- be installed by manufacturers. This closed out several potential suppliers at the retail level -- and in effect makes the consumer pay whatever the manufacturer charges for the safety accessories. Certainly more competition could be available at the dealer level -- or even on an open market."

**ENGINEER JOINS INSTITUTE STAFF** -- Jackson Wong, a project/systems engineer formerly associated with Atlantic Research Corp. as advanced systems manager, has joined the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety research staff in a senior capacity.

Mr. Wong, who holds both a bachelors degree and a masters degree in mechanical engineering from Oregon State College, specialized during his college studies in automotive engineering, thermodynamics, gas turbine and internal combustion engines, and engineering materials and metallurgy.

After taking his masters in 1959, he joined Boeing Co. as a research engineer. In 1961 he became chief, preliminary design, reaction controls for Bell Aerosystems Co., and in 1965 joined the technical staff of Bellcomm, Inc.

**RAIL-HIGHWAY DEATHS AT 1,505** -- Rail-highway grade crossing accidents resulted in 1,505 deaths and 3,712 injuries in 1969, according to DOT's Federal Railroad Administration. These figures are slightly below those for 1968.

Fatalities occurring at rail-highway grade crossings represent 3 per cent of all highway fatalities, although such crossings account for only about one-tenth of 1 per cent of all highway mileage. These deaths represented the largest class of fatality in all railroad-related deaths and injuries.

According to a 1969 FRA report, annual federal-aid highway program expenditures on grade crossing safety from 1963 to 1967 averaged about \$190 million annually, with \$160 million from federal funds. No later figures are available.

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