In a study of radar detector use and speeds of large trucks in seven Eastern states, researchers at the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety found at least 40 percent of tractor-semitrailers were employing detectors. Furthermore at least 46 percent of the trucks carrying hazardous materials were using radar detectors.

The researchers used the "radar detector detector" (RDD) to gather information on radar detector use in nearly 2,000 straight trucks, tractor-semitrailer trucks, twin-trailer trucks, and bobtails. "In each state, trucks with radar detectors were more likely than those without to be traveling at high speeds in excess of speed limits," the researchers say. The speed limit for trucks was 55 mph during the study period in spring of 1990. Overall, about one and one-half times as many trucks with radar detectors were exceeding 65 mph as were those without. Twice as many with radar detectors were exceeding 70 mph. Speeds of target vehicles were measured using radar that had been retuned so that it could not be picked up by commercial radar detector units.

Large Percentage of Big Trucks Are Using Radar Detectors

Hazardous materials trucks with radar detectors in use were more likely than such trucks without radar detectors to be speeding, say the researchers.

(Cont'd on Page 2)
8 Groups Urge Ban On Radar Detectors In Commercial Vehicles

Eight national organizations with wide-ranging interests have joined in petitioning the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to ban radar detectors in commercial vehicles involved in interstate commerce.


"The American Trucking Associations, and the trucking industry, is absolutely in support of a ban on radar detectors because the only reason you’d want to have them in a truck is to drive faster than you ought to,” said ATA President Tom Donohue.

“We’ve got a new study showing that at least 40 percent of all tractor-trailers on interstate highways are using radar detectors. Nearly half of all trucks hauling hazardous materials have radar detectors in use. And trucks using radar detectors are more likely than those without radar detectors to be traveling at excessive speeds, more than 70 mph,” says Brian O’Neill, president of the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.

"High speed increases the chances of crashing," says O’Neill, "and when crashes involve tractor-trailers, the results too often are catastrophic. This is why lower speed limits are posted for trucks than for cars in some jurisdictions. Police should be enforcing these speed limits, but the widespread use of radar detectors is undermining their efforts. This is the reason we want the FHWA to ban radar detectors in the vehicles it regulates."

Large Percentage Of Big Trucks Are Using Radar Detectors

(Cont’d from Page 1)

Radar detector use in tractor-trailers ranged from 37 to 52 percent among the seven states, with Connecticut and Virginia, which both ban radar detectors, at the low end of the range of use rates. This finding suggests that these laws "may reduce radar detector use by large trucks, although the effect—if any—is slight."

The researchers concluded that "new technology such as the RDD could enhance enforcement of state radar detector bans and encourage more states to pass laws outlawing these devices." New York State has very recently passed a law banning radar detector use in vehicles weighing more than 18,000 pounds.

For copies of "Radar Detector Use in Large Trucks," by Allan E. Williams, Nancy Teed, Mark Freedman, and Adrian K. Lund, write: Publications, Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, 1005 N. Glebe Road, Arlington, Va. 22201.

Lowdown on Radar Detector Slowdown: It Doesn't Last Long

That speeding vehicles with radar detectors slow down when their detectors pick up police radar signals has long been known by highway patrol officers and others. But information about whether and how soon they return to high speed driving after passing out of the radar signal range has been somewhat elusive. New studies by researchers at the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety now show that this effect is very short lived.

It has long been claimed by radar detector manufacturers that motorists use the devices mainly to keep themselves aware of the proper speed.

"Although drivers with radar detectors do slow in the presence of detectable radar signals, they do not remain at these reduced speeds beyond the immediate vicinity of the radar," say the researchers. "As soon as the perceived threat of speed limit law enforcement is no longer immediate, speeders begin returning to higher speeds," they report.

The institute studies found that much of the speed reduction attributable to radar detectors was erased by one mile after exposure to radar, and nearly all of the reduction was erased by four to five miles.

Two separate speed measurement studies were conducted during clear weather on a mostly level stretch of a rural interstate highway in Maryland. The first examined the duration of speed reductions in the entire traffic stream using pavement imbedded speed monitoring devices. The second examined the duration of speed reductions among specific speeding vehicles using nondetectable radar.

In the first study, after the exposure to police radar, the percentage of vehicles exceeding the 55 mph speed limit by more than 10 mph fell by one-third. As little as
The cost of placing damaged vehicle parts with crash parts supplied by original equipment manufacturers is excessive, says the Alliance of American Insurers. Rebuilding a demolished 1990 Ford Escort LX re-tailing at $9,846 using parts made by original equipment manufacturers would cost—without labor—$38,652.

Despite Real-World Evidence, NHTSA Denies Petition for Stronger Automobile Bumpers

"The bottom line is that this is going to cost consumers money."

So says Brian O'Neill, president of the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety reacting to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) decision to turn down Consumers Union's petition seeking to restore the federal government's 5 mph bumper standard rolled back to 2.5 mph in 1982.

"Motorists are going to keep on paying for unnecessary damage to their cars from low speed crashes until NHTSA decides to end its eight-year war on consumer interests and reinstate strong federal bumper requirements," says O'Neill.

When the standard was weakened in 1982, NHTSA predicted consumer costs would decline because of lower prices and decreased fuel consumption. "But insurance costs have definitely increased," O'Neill says, noting the agency relies on its own engineering judgments and analyses "that have been shown to be incompetent," rather than actual crash loss experience and crash test results.

In a Federal Register notice, NHTSA rejected data from Consumers Union showing that when manufacturers weakened the standard, models with the weaker bumpers cost from $146 to $1,081 more to repair. NHTSA also rejected studies by the Highway Loss Data Institute showing that the frequency of claims increased dramatically for cars with weakened bumpers compared with models equipped with 5 mph bumpers, saying that the studies don't show how many collisions occur at speeds between 2.5 and 5 mph.

Furthermore, the Institute points out, the Department of Transportation's insistence on narrowing the issue to 2.5 versus 5 mph bumpers reflects its continuing refusal to acknowledge the evidence in its own rulemaking that 5 mph "no-damage" bumpers afford improved protection and reduced repair costs in barrier crashes up to at least 15 mph. To narrow the issue to collisions that occur between 2.5 and 5 mph is to ignore these expanded benefits, which have been solidly established in DOT's own rulemaking record.

NHTSA said the insurance studies comparing relative bumper performance of cars equipped with strong 5 mph bumpers with substantially weaker bumpers were based on too few models to provide a representative sample of the entire fleet of automobiles.

Nonsense, says O'Neill. "The insurance studies are based on a limited number of car models precisely because these were the only models that are comparable in all respects except the bumpers. Thus the comparisons resulting from these studies are 'pure.' They reflect the effects of bumper changes alone."

Moreover in its current analysis, the government continues to rely on erroneous engineering studies.
DOT Receives Recommendations To Make Roads Safer

A national law enforcement summit meeting convened by the Secretary of the Department of Transportation (DOT) has produced a comprehensive package of recommendations stressing steps to reduce speeding, remove drunken and drugged drivers from the road, and strengthen vehicle occupant protection programs.

Samuel K. Skinner, Secretary of Transportation, praised the efforts of the law enforcement officers who drafted the recommendations at the Traffic Safety Summit, held recently in Chicago.

The summit attendees were asked to propose ways to reduce deaths and injuries on the country's roads. Their recommendations on speeding included:
- DOT should support a general ban of all radar detectors. The initial approach would be for the Federal Highway Administration to immediately prohibit the commercial-vehicle use of radar detectors through regulation.
- DOT and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) should request the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to allow law enforcement to use unmanned radar, which a recent study shows reduces speeding. NHTSA should develop guidelines on how states might use such strategies to comply with FCC regulations.
- DOT should lead the way in discouraging automobile marketing campaigns used by some companies that depict speed and other unsafe driving practices as acceptable behavior.
- NHTSA should reinstate the standard making 85 mph the top speed shown on speedometers in all motor vehicles.
- NHTSA should continue to explore the development of new technology, such as

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passenger cars, the side doors were opened. NHTSA estimates more than 59,000 such incidents may occur each year. In addition to side doors opening, the agency reports finding that during crashes hatchback doors, tailgates, and rear doors on vans fly open, too.

Using standard test procedures, NHTSA also studied the load limits of individual locks and latches and found that in actual crashes, there is little if any correlation between test results and actual crash performance.

One likely reason is that relatively strong latches and hinges are being installed on unreinforced sheet metal that is easily torn away, even in a frontal impact. "This is akin," says Preuss, "to mounting a strong lock on a rotten barn door."

In a separate but related action, the Institute told NHTSA that a Ford proposal to modify the side impact test procedure for light trucks could safely be adopted if the agency specifies door latch and hinge retention requirements.

Last December NHTSA issued a proposal to extend the current requirements of FMVSS 214, to pickups, vans, and utility vehicles by the 1993 model year. Under NHTSA's proposal the current test procedure would be applied to light trucks. In the laboratory test, a piston presses a steel cylinder against the vehicle door exterior, with the cylinder positioned above the door sill. The standard specifies the amount of crush permitted and is designed to prevent intrusion. To meet the rule, manufacturers who are not already doing so would have to add side door beams in pickups, vans, and utility vehicles.

Ford wants to revise the test to allow the bottom edge of the cylindrical test device to strike the door sill, which would act as a door beam, limiting or preventing intrusion.

Because the standard's primary benefit is in side crashes involving trees and poles, Preuss says "the Institute finds merit in Ford's proposal to lower the loading cylinder height to account for the higher position of the sill in light trucks." However, the Ford proposal does not address the problem of the door opening during impact.

This could be overcome, says Preuss, if the agency specifies that the door must remain securely latched and the hinges attached to the body during the test.

Lowdown on Radar Detector Slowdown: It Doesn't Last Long

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one mile after the police radar, 38 percent of vehicles were again above 65. For tractor-trailers exceeding the speed limits by 10 mph, the percentage fell by two-thirds directly after the radar, but half the reduction disappeared one mile after exposure.

In the second study of individual vehicles, radar detector use indicated by speed reduction or brake lights when exposed to police radar, was significantly more likely among tractor-trailers (58 percent) than light trucks (38 percent) or cars (32 percent). When exposed to police radar, vehicles with radar detectors had slowed down by an average of 10 mph, while other vehicles slowed only one mph. (Drivers with radar detectors had been traveling one mph faster than other drivers before the radar exposure but 8 mph slower right after exposure.)

One mile after exposure to radar, drivers with radar detectors were halfway back to their previous speeds, and by three and four miles after the radar, the speed differences between cars with and without radar detectors were no longer significant.

The researchers conclude, "The quick re-acceleration of drivers using radar detectors is consistent with results from other speed enforcement studies and provides strong evidence that detectors are used primarily to evade police detection of excessive speed."

Higher Speed Limits: Deaths Up 32 Percent On Rural Interstates

Fatalities on U.S. rural interstate highways in 40 states with 65 mph speed limits increased by nearly 32 percent in 1989 compared with 1982 through 86, according to an analysis of recent government highway fatality statistics by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.

In contrast the fatalities on all other roads in those states increased only by about 2 percent during the same period. Similarly, fatalities on urban interstate highways, where the speed limit remained at 55 or below, increased by more than 8 percent.

The overall risk for a rural interstate fatality was up by 29 percent for 1989 compared with all other roads and up 22 percent compared with urban interstates.

The risk for occupants of passenger vehicles on rural interstates increased by 32 percent relative to all other roads and 28 percent compared with urban interstates. The increase for drivers of passenger vehicles was somewhat lower: relative risk increased by 24 percent compared with all other roads and 18 percent compared with urban interstates.

For the eight states that kept a 55 mph speed limit, rural interstate fatalities were 10 percent lower in 1989 than the average for 1982 through ‘86, but fatalities on all other roads increased 3 percent and those on urban interstates increased 15 percent.

"Thus," the researchers conclude, "the risk of a rural interstate fatality actually declined in these states."

The years 1982 through ‘86 are the most recent five years before any state raised the speed limit from 55 to 65 mph. States began raising limits during 1987 and by 1990, 40 states had at least one calendar year’s experience with the higher speed limits.

Earlier Institute research using the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s Fatal Accident Reporting System data for 38 states shows that during 1988 deaths rose nearly 30 percent on rural interstate highways because of the 65 mph speed limit (Status Report, Vol. 24, No. 9, Sept. 23, 1989).

DOT Receives Recommendations To Make Roads Safer

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automated speed measuring devices (photo radar), to help police enforce traffic laws.

Attendees at the DOT sponsored summit also stressed the need to reduce driving under the influence of alcohol and other drugs. The summit conferees recommended increased federal funding for enforcement activities on local, state, and federal levels and fewer restrictions on how these funds are used.

Some of the funds could be spent on new technology to make traffic safety enforcement more effective, for example, videocameras to tape suspects arrested for driving while intoxicated.

Other proposals to reduce the number of drivers under the influence of alcohol on the road:

- NHTSA should encourage the passage of administrative license suspension in all jurisdictions.
- States should be encouraged to enact legislation that prohibits the presence of any illicit drug in the body of any person and to pass measures that prohibit advertising alcoholic beverages on radio and television.
- NHTSA should develop guidelines for the most efficient use of sobriety checkpoints and support the development of technology to enable officers to more readily detect alcohol- or drug-impaired drivers on the road.

Safety belt laws have been enacted in 34 states and the District of Columbia, and every state has child passenger protection laws.

To help reach DOT’s goal of increasing seat belt usage to 70 percent, a recommendation was made to restrict federal grants to law enforcement agencies that

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Nationwide And USAA Donate Alcohol Sensors to Police

Police departments around the country are dramatically increasing their ability to spot alcohol-impaired drivers, thanks to Nationwide Insurance and USAA.

Nationwide Insurance Company has begun donating passive alcohol sensors to law enforcement agencies in areas served by the insurer's 13 regional offices as part of a $6 million campaign to reduce the incidence of alcohol impairment among the nation's drivers. USAA has a similar program that is just getting underway in San Antonio, Texas.

Passive alcohol sensors, devices that can unobtrusively capture and measure the presence of alcohol on a driver's exhaled breath, help police officers quickly screen drivers for alcohol impairment.

If the preliminary measure indicates the person may be impaired, the officer can then request that the driver take further roadside sobriety tests. The sensors are particularly helpful at sobriety checkpoints, where the officers can quickly and efficiently screen the vast majority of motorists who are sober.

"These devices are to alcohol detection what radar is to speeding," says Charleston County, S.C., Police Lieutenant Richard Allen, whose department has been using passive alcohol sensors for the last three years.

"They quickly determine whether a person has been drinking alcohol. The detectors are dependable and make officers feel more confident about assessing a situation because sometimes, people can hide the use of alcohol pretty well."

The sensors work by pumping in a small amount of exhaled air when held a few inches from a driver's face. Designed as a preliminary screening device, the reading cannot be used to provide evi-

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Two Supreme Court Decisions Help Police Efforts to Curb Drinking Drivers

Two recent decisions by the U.S. Supreme Court have added to the arsenal of law enforcement officers trying to remove drinking drivers from the road.

In a six to three decision in Michigan v. Sitz, the Court ruled that sobriety checkpoints are "consistent with the Fourth Amendment" and noted that the choice among alternatives for apprehending alcohol-impaired drivers "remains with the government officials who have a unique understanding of, and a responsibility for, limited public resources, including a finite number of police officers." The intrusion resulting from checkpoints is for Constitutional purposes indistinguishable from checkpoint stops that have been previously upheld, the Court said.

Sobriety checkpoints have been used in Europe, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand since the 1970s to deter drinking drivers. They have been tried intermittently in this country starting in the 1980s, but questions about whether they were acceptable under the Constitution limited their use. There are now indications that law enforcement officers around the country are planning to set up more sobriety checkpoints.

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Aetna Contributes 590 Video Cameras to Police Departments

A year ago on July 4, Aetna Life and Casualty began a project with Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) that has made the work of police officers and prosecutors much easier.

Aetna began by donating 15 video cameras to the Houston Police Department’s DWI (driving while intoxicated) Task Force. Because of the project’s initial success, the program has been expanded. By July 4, 1990, Aetna had contributed 590 video cameras to 65 police departments in 26 metropolitan regions.

“They have been tremendously effective, most importantly in keeping cases from clogging up court dockets,” says Bob Caruthers, Aetna’s chief spokesman. “The vast majority of the folks that are videotaped plead guilty when confronted with the evidence. Those few cases that do go to trial do result in convictions.”

Two years ago Vena Cronin, president of the Houston chapter of MADD, began riding along on the 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. shift with the officers assigned to the DWI task force, and she began to understand their frustrations.

“We have a driving while intoxicated problem here in Houston,” says Cronin, whose youngest son was killed by a drunk driver in 1977. Houston’s squad of 10 patrolmen and two sergeants together make over 4,000 DWI arrests annually.

“I noticed that we were losing [DWI] court cases... I just kept thinking that if the judge or the jury had seen how the person was driving recklessly, we would not get a ‘not guilty’ verdict.”

In a search for a better courtroom outcome, three of the DWI task force officers purchased video cameras with their own funds and began filming suspects from the time they spotted their cars weaving dangerously through the field test and arrest procedure.

“I thought that was the way to go,” says Cronin. “I sought funding and our MADD chapter decided to make it our top priority.” Fortunately, says Cronin, Aetna officials in Hartford called and asked how they might help. That led to the 15 camera donation, and for the first time, police routinely began filming DWI suspects from patrol cars. Over the ensuing year, the number of DWI cases dismissed in court has been cut in half.

“We love it,” says E.J. Smith, acting captain of the traffic accident division. “It’s almost like having another witness with you.” Juries like it because “here’s a witness that’s not prejudiced.”

In Tampa, Florida, Aetna worked with the Hillsborough County MADD chapter to provide the police department with 10 cameras in September 1989. By December 1989 Tampa’s alcohol enforcement task force had made 128 arrests for driving under the influence of alcohol using the video cameras donated by Aetna. Of those, 107 cases have been completed, with a 96 percent conviction rate, says Corporal Buddy Brogdon. Of the 107 cases, only five actually went to trial.

Brogdon calls the cameras “probably the most innovative tool in traffic enforcement... We only have 10. We could double the amount, if not triple it.”

The cameras reduce the officers’ time spent in courtrooms, giving them more time to be on the street. The cameras also save about an hour during the arrest procedure because they eliminate the need for a second sobriety test before a camera at the stationhouse, Brogdon says.

Labor Secretary Dole Praised for Action To Protect Workers From Top Job Hazard

Labor Secretary Elizabeth H. Dole’s proposal to make safety belt and motorcycle helmet use mandatory on the job across America has been hailed as a significant step by leaders in the highway safety community.

“This is important because for too long too many people have failed to recognize that motor vehicle crashes, not manufacturing injuries, are the number one cause of death on the job,” Chuck Hurley, vice president of the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety says. “Now more workers will be protected from injuries in crashes,” Hurley adds.

“What better way is there to protect American workers than with effective, and readily available, safety equipment like belts and helmets?”

“It’s fitting that Secretary Dole announced the mandatory belt and helmet use plan on July 11, the anniversary of the automatic restraint standard that she issued six years ago as Secretary of Transportation,” says Hurley. “The automatic restraint rule has resulted in more and more cars being equipped with air bags—and the best protection a motor vehicle occupant can get is the combination of an air bag and a lap-shoulder safety belt.

Hurley adds that he hopes an increasing number of U.S. companies will begin selecting their fleet vehicles with an eye toward maximum worker protection. “We hope more companies purchase vehicles with air bags, antilock brakes, and other safety features—features that go a long way toward protecting companies’ most valuable assets—their workers.”
Legislation Would Ban Radar Detector Use by Truckers

When the Department of Transportation's (DOT) $28 billion appropriation bill becomes law, there will be a provision outlawing the use of radar detectors by commercial drivers, if Senator Frank R. Lautenberg, New Jersey Democrat, gets his way.

"Anyone who's driven on the highway with large trucks bearing down on them knows how dangerous and intimidating they can be," Lautenberg says. "There's no excuse for letting them flaunt the law and endanger others by using fuzz busters."

"Fuzz busters have one purpose only," says Lautenberg. "They allow their owners to exceed the speed limit by warning them of upcoming police radar guns."

If the Lautenberg amendment becomes law, DOT must issue a regulation banning radar detectors in commercial vehicles within nine months of enactment of the 1991 appropriations bill.

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety praised Lautenberg for quickly responding to their request for the ban.

"We know that trucks with radar detectors are more likely to be traveling at excessive speeds, and speed kills," says Judith Lee Stone, the group's executive director. "Senator Lautenberg's leadership will help keep truckers at the speed limit."

In support of the amendment, Lautenberg cited a study by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety showing that at least 40 percent of all tractor-trailer drivers traveling in seven Eastern states were using radar detectors. The researchers also found the drivers of big rigs who use radar detectors are more likely to travel at speeds in excess of 65 mph, even though the speed limit in each state is 55 mph. (See Page One.)

DOT Receives Recommendations To Make Roads Safer

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enforce a mandatory safety belt policy. Other policies to encourage seat belt use included:

- Develop and distribute nationally a model program where service organizations and the medical community can sponsor child safety seat programs so that every infant leaving a hospital has an approved seat.
- Disseminate information to state motor vehicle departments on the benefits of safety belt use and encourage them to incorporate this information into driver safety programs.

Skinner says a panel will be named soon to implement a number of the summit proposals.

Nationwide And USAA Donate Alcohol Sensors to Police

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ence in court, but provides only probable cause for further testing.

During the summer, Nationwide began distributing 25 of the $645 devices to each of its 13 regional offices, to be parcelled out to police departments in local communities. Nationwide also is producing a video to be used for teaching police officers how to use the sensors.

The sensors are being distributed to area police departments in Cleveland, Canton, and Columbus, Ohio; Harrisburg and Butler, Pa.; Syracuse, N.Y.; Memphis, Tenn.; Raleigh, N.C.; Gainesville, Fla.; Annapolis, Md.; Lynchburg, Va.; Wallingford, Conn.; Portland, Ore.; and Hato Rey, P.R. Additional sensors will be distributed during Labor Day weekend, company officials say. Nationwide also is considering expanding the program through local agents.

In July, as part of a local effort to combat drunk driving, USAA donated 10 passive alcohol sensors that are built into flashlights to the San Antonio, Texas, police department. William O. Gibson, chief of police, says last year alcohol was implicated in 73 deaths in San Antonio, and he is hoping the detectors will help bring those numbers down.

After only a week, the 16 officers using the devices "are just sold on these things," says Sergeant Paul Buske, department spokesman. "It saves so much of their time, because they have to take a suspected DWI down to the intoxylizer to be registered on the machine. They register 0.08 and then have to release them."

In a report filed shortly after receiving the units, the DWI enforcement unit supervisor, Sergeant Frank Alvarado, Jr., told his superiors: "The DWI officers used the sensors for these two days and were very surprised by the accuracy of the sensors, once they adapted to their use."
Institute Recommends That NHTSA Adopt A Test Dummy of 9-Month-Old Child

"Child occupant protection has remained a low priority too long," says Allan F. Williams, vice president for research at the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.

The Institute has urged the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to adopt a design and performance proposal for a test dummy representing a 9-month-old child and to promptly require the use of the test dummy in compliance testing of child restraints.

The adoption of a 9-month-old test dummy, designed to evaluate restraint systems intended for young children between 18 years and 25 pounds in crash tests, is particularly important, says Williams, because it would be the first instrumented test dummy representing a child younger than 3 years of age. Of the 1,465 deaths of children under one through 12 years of age in vehicle crashes last year, 183 were children one-year-old or younger.

It has been 15 years since NHTSA first proposed dynamic requirements for child restraints under Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard 213, Williams notes. Currently NHTSA only sets specifications for test dummies representing a 6-month-old infant and 3-year-old child to evaluate child restraints. Last year NHTSA published proposed criteria for a 6-year-old child dummy (See Status Report, Vol. 24, No. 12, Dec. 9, 1989).

Despite Evidence, NHTSA Denies Bumper Petition

(Cont'd from Page 3)

Even for the latest decision, NHTSA has not conducted crash tests to determine bumper performance levels. Instead it continues to rely on subjective engineering judgments. "This policy was adopted even though crash tests are objective and provide reliable assessments of bumper performance," the Institute says.

O'Neill says NHTSA staff "have stated repeatedly that bumper rulemaking has a very low priority. They've been unwilling to competently evaluate compelling evidence that weaker bumpers result in much more crash damage. ... Now NHTSA is saying to Consumers Union and the rest of us who have been arguing this issue for years that it really doesn't matter how much competent evidence we present, because federal regulators are going to stick to their 1982 rollback of bumper requirements, no matter what."

He adds: "We challenge NHTSA to produce one bit of real, not theoretical, evidence of consumer savings (price reductions, fuel savings, etc.) for specific cars with weakened bumpers."

JEEP PETITION

Three groups have petitioned the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to reopen its investigation of Jeep CJ rollover crashes and asked the agency to investigate possible suspension defects that "may be greatly aggravating the rollover tendencies of some CJs." Ben Kelley, president of the Institute for Highway Traffic Safety, submitted 34 documents to NHTSA, including information on a possible remedy for the 300,000 CJs still on the road.

Chrysler says most of the documents are not new to the safety agency. NHTSA already had obtained and was studying the documents provided by the petitioners, says Tim Hurd, a NHTSA spokesman, and a decision on whether to continue the inquiry is expected by early fall.

High Court Decisions Help Police Efforts

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In Pennsylvania v. Muniz, the Court also ruled, in an eight to one decision, that videotape of someone accused of driving under the influence of alcohol could be introduced at the suspect's trial. The use of videotapes is considered extremely useful to police because they may generate more guilty pleas, which allow officers to spend more time on the streets and less in courtrooms.
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