



THE SAFETY RECORD

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Two Tire Makers Add Tire Aging Replacement Guidelines for U.S. Market	1
Newly Released Documents and Data Highlight Explorer Rollover Problems	1
Safety Advocates Cry Foul After NHTSA Weakens Snow Tire Standard	2
Run-Off Road Crashes Among the Costliest, Researchers Find	2
Vehicle Mis-Match Linked to Spinal Cord Injuries	4
Federal Government Increasingly Uses Pre-Emption to Bypass State Laws	5
Ford Throttle Cable Recall Still Leaves Millions at Risk for Unintended Acceleration	6
NHTSA Proposes NCAP Rating Label, But Will Consumers Learn Anything?	7
Shock and Awe Parents Into Keeping Kids Safe	7

Two Tire Makers Add Tire Aging Replacement Guidelines for U.S. Market

Continental and Michelin recently issued Technical Bulletins on tire aging, joining a growing chorus of tire manufacturers and automakers issuing tire age replacement guidelines for the U.S. market. These bulletins are nearly identical to the Bridgestone-Firestone October 2005 recommendation that specified all tires should be removed after 10 years regardless of the remaining tread depth. They also follow guidelines published in overseas markets that have been in circulation for several years (*Safety Record* V3, Issue 1).

Tire age degradation hit the radar of safety advocates, regulators and members of Congress after the Firestone ATX / Wilderness recalls in 2000 and 2001, when experts concluded that age degradation played a role in the catastrophic failure of these tires. While the tire industry has known about the issue for decades, the problem initially gained traction in late 1980s after the publication of several German studies noting a

disproportionate rise in failures once tires reach 6 years old. The studies recommended warnings and user-friendly date of manufacturer information on tires. In response, some German automakers and Toyota added 6-year tire life recommendations to their owner's manuals in 1990. Over the next ten years, others added similar warnings. The issue slipped into relative obscurity, as did most of the warnings, which were placed deep into several-hundred page owner's manuals. But the Firestone debacle and the ensuing TREAD Act forced NHTSA to examine tire aging issues. A provision in the Safe Accountable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Equity Act of 2005 also required the agency to report to Congress by August 2007 on tire aging, including potential regulatory testing to evaluate the risk of failure after a tire has been aged.

There are several common threads among the new U. S. technical bulletins. All recommend tire replacement after 10 years regardless of tread depth.

All suggest annual inspections by a qualified tire specialist once a tire reaches 5 years old, including unused spares and tires that have experienced little use. The bulletins also claim that accurately predicting service life more precisely is not possible because of the wide range of conditions to which tires are subjected. Bridgestone-Firestone and Continental's Technical Bulletins also defer to the vehicle manufacturers recommendations, which, in many instances, are 6-year tire life limits.

Impending NHTSA regulatory actions are expected to be based, at least in part, on the data from Ford Motor Company funded and published research on the mechanisms of tire aging and methods of artificial aging. The agency will also be using its own research project on aged tires that has generated data on aged tire performance (Phoenix Tire Data) and examination of methods of aging. The tire industry is adding to this through an ASTM working group that is examining age testing.

(Cont. on p. 4)

Newly Released Documents and Data Highlight Explorer Rollover Problems

Six years ago, Ford Motor Company laid the blame for Explorer rollovers on defective Firestone tires, but newly available data shows that even with replacement tires, tire-related rollover crashes in Explorers are growing and internal documents unearthed during recent litigation show that the popular SUV's stability problems are also rooted in vehicle design.

Documents and test reports introduced recently in an Oxford, Mississippi case (*Love, et al V. Ford Motor Company*) showed that Ford-approved replacement tires for the Explorer during the Firestone recall period actually increased the likelihood the vehicle would rollover. In its ADAMS computer model simulated J-turn test—the company's long-standing minimum resistance to rollover stan-

dard—Goodyear, Continental-General, Cooper and Uniroyal models in 15- and 16-inch sizes experienced in two-wheel lift in the simulation. Despite evidence that these tires increased vehicle rollover propensity and the combinations failed Ford's minimum safety requirements, the company added several of the Goodyears and a General tire model to the

(Cont. on p. 3)

Safety Advocates Cry Foul After NHTSA Weakens Snow Tire Standard

Washington, D.C. – Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety have urged the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to reconsider a decision to downgrade the certifying test for snow tires so that less robust tires can pass.

In January, the agency amended a June 2003 final rule to upgrade the performance requirements of new tires for passenger vehicles and light trucks by weakening the standards for snow tires. The amendment now reduces the low pressure/endurance test speeds for snow tires from 120 km/h to 110km/h for snow tires with load ranges C, D, and E. “The effect of this change is a decrease in the regulatory burden on manufacturers of snow tires,” the agency noted in its Federal Register notice of the amended rule.

However, the new rule retains “chunking” – defined as “breaking away of pieces of the tread or sidewall” – as a measure of tire failure during the certification. The test had

proved controversial with industry trade groups, who argued that the agency should either redefine chunking or eliminate it as an indicator of tire failure. The Rubber Manufacturers Association, the Japan Automobile Tyre Manufacturers and the European Tyre and Rim Technical Organization asserted that chunking during an endurance test did not represent tire failures in the real world.

The change surprised Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety, which also accused NHTSA of failing to consider real-world circumstances in reducing the test parameters. In its petition, the safety group noted that millions of motorists travel long distances at high speed on dry pavement with snow tires on their vehicles – conditions that can lead to chunking, and ultimately, tire failure.

“The agency should not be in the business of lowering its standards to accommodate a defective tire design,” says Gerald Donaldson, the group’s

senior research director.

Under the Transportation Recall Enhancement, Accountability and Documentation Act (TREAD), NHTSA is required to revise and update federal standards for new passenger vehicle tires. In response, the agency created a new standard, FMVSS 139, New Pneumatic Radial Tires for Light Vehicles. The intention was to create stricter standards to ensure that tires can withstand the effects of tire heat build-up and severe under-inflation at highway speeds during fully loaded conditions.

Before the agency posted the final rule, it subjected 20 passenger and light truck tires to the new test, and all but one snow tire passed. In considering tire trade groups’ petitions for reconsideration, NHTSA tested more than 30 passenger and light truck snow tires under the new proposed test. It found that more than a third of the passenger car snow tires and half of the light truck snow tires failed the test due to chunking. In a

more dramatic demonstration of the phenomenon, the RMA also tested 68 snow tires under the new testing standard and found that half failed due to chunking. Despite the significant failure rate, the agency decided to keep chunking as an indicator of tire failure, because “in real world driving conditions operating a vehicle with chunked tires creates a potential safety hazard due to wheel imbalance and vehicle vibrations.” The agency noted that allowing tread chunking just short of exposing the reinforcement cords would create “an unacceptable risk of imminent tire failure.”

Instead, NHTSA made the test easier for snow tires to pass. NHTSA concluded that snow tires, with their higher hysteretic tread compounds, greater tread depth and smaller tread blocks for better snow performance, would be too difficult to redesign to pass the new test.

“We can ensure virtually all the safety benefits from upgrading the test speed for snow tires and
(Cont. on p. 8)

Run-Off Road Crashes Among the Costliest, Researchers Find

High-speed, single-vehicle crashes in which objects were struck placed a \$60 billion economic burden on society in 1999 and 2000, according to a new study published in *Accident Analysis & Prevention*. Rollover accidents were the second most costly, at \$34 billion. In total, off-road crashes cost society \$119 billion.

The study examined crash effects by type and severity. Using National Accident Sampling System and General Estimate System data, the researchers also produced estimates of hard dollar consequences and comprehensive costs, which add in the non-monetary losses. The total

comprehensive costs of police-reported crashes in the U.S. from 1999-2001 were \$346 billion. The comprehensive costs of other types of collisions in those years were: \$68 billion for cross-path collisions; \$43 billion for rear-end collisions; \$34 billion for side-swipes; and \$24 billion each for pedestrian accidents and head-on collisions.

Researchers say that these estimates could be used for evaluating safety countermeasures designing safer vehicles or designing roadways to reduce certain types of crashes.

Safety Issue Reviews and Chronologies from SRS

SRS offers chronologies on a wide range of safety topics. Our chronologies trace important safety issues providing an overview based on a wide array of sources ranging from worldwide published literature, government documents, litigation, and marketing materials. We track what was known, when it was known, and important details that help the reader understand the current state of the problem. Contact SRS for more detail.

Product Marketing

SRS maintains a vast library of manufacturer marketing materials and specifications from around the world. SRS can provide detailed research on makes and models or simple specification information. Contact SRS for more detail.

Newly Released Documents and Data Highlight Explorer Rollover Problems

(Cont. from p. 1)
“approved” tire replacement list.

According to the testimony of Ford’s representative Thomas Nilles, introduced in the Love trial, Ford’s J-turn ADAMS model requirements only apply to original equipment tires. Replacement tires don’t have to meet the company standard, Nilles testified. Presiding U.S. Magistrate, Jerry Davis, instructed the jury that Ford management approved replacement tires for the Explorer that did not pass all of Ford’s stability tests.

The deposition and documents introduced in the Love case were first obtained by attorney James Gilbert in *Don Jackson v. Ford Motor Company* after nearly a year-long struggle, because Ford claimed it no longer had the ADAMS testing data. But in deposition testimony, Greg Dabkowski, one of Ford’s engineers who evaluated the replacement tires following the recall, admitted having possession of boxes of documents and to the existence of a laptop, which had gone missing, with the data. Shortly after releasing the documents Ford settled the Jackson case.

Ford’s knowledge of the Explorer’s handling sensitivity to certain tires goes back to its initial introduction 15 years ago. In 1990, Ford issued a highly unusual bulletin and owner’s manual instruction warning that all-season, high-performance, or larger tires can “adversely affect the handling of the vehicle and make it easier to lose control and roll over which could result in serious injury.” In other words, simply changing the *type* of tire could increase rollover propensity.

Subsequent ADAMS testing on

the second-generation Explorer continued to show that the vehicle was very sensitive to minor changes in tire properties. Firestone also examined these sensitivities in the early 1990s during its development of a tire for the Explorer. According to Dean Tener, Firestone’s ADAMS specialist who ran the Explorer simulations for Ford, even modest changes in the force and moment properties of the tires resulted in significant change in the J-turn results for this vehicle making it pass one test and fail another.

Gilbert said that the documents and testing uncovered in the Jackson case show “Ford’s replacement program simply swapped tires with tread separation problems for tires that increased your chance of rollover.”

Questions about the veracity of the ADAMS model have been lingering for years. Many wonder whether ADAMS could safely serve as Ford’s required sign-off, or whether the vehicle’s handling margin was as small as it appeared in the simulation—or both.

A recent statistical analysis by Randy Whitfield of Quality Control Systems Corp. shows continuing fatalities related to tire failures in Explorers even after the defective Firestone tires were replaced, raising more questions about the Explorer’s handling and stability margins.

Whitfield’s crash data analysis, which he submitted to a NHTSA docket (12150) on their Early Warning Reporting data, examines accidents involving tire factors found in the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS), a dataset of fatal crashes in the U.S. based on police accident reports. The

data do not contain information on the specific tire factor—such as defect, puncture, maintenance—involved in the accident, nor do they note the tire manufacturer. But the data can show trends and comparisons between vehicle models that provide important insight.

The QCS report found an upward trend in occupant deaths in Explorers with reported tire failures beginning in the mid 1990s, with a peak in 2000 followed by a significant drop in 2001 (i.e., following the recall). However, by 2003, deaths increased considerably, reaching pre-recall levels. The number of deaths continued to rise in 2004, although at a lesser rate.

Data from 2002 to 2004 show that occupant deaths in Explorers are disproportionately represented in tire-related crashes compared to peer SUVs. Explorers accounted for 33% of all persons killed in the entire fleet of mid-size SUVs and 52% of all persons killed in tire related crashes of midsize SUVs.

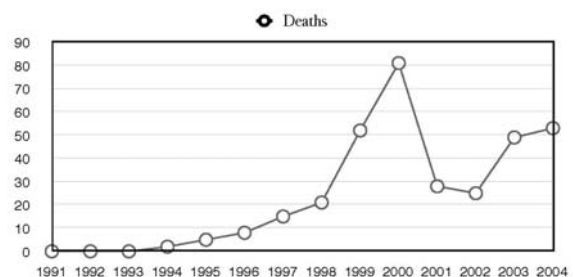
The analysis also shows that tire failures in fatal rollovers are strongly associated with the speed of the crash. Again, the Explorer stands out among peer SUVs, particularly as the speed limit increases to 70 mph.

One theory expressed by some experts is that high-speed roll-

overs may be related to a handling anomaly found in Hotchkiss rear suspensions, like those on the Explorer, which Ford characterizes as rear axle “skate.” Testing by both plaintiffs and defense experts has demonstrated controllability problems in the Explorer (i.e., oversteer) when a tire disablement excites the natural resonance of the rear axle, particularly at higher speeds. During the Firestone recall in Venezuela, Ford also replaced the stock (U.S.) shock absorbers with those it used in Australia, because they had a higher damping level that helped reduce the skate problem. U.S. owners were not offered the shock replacement.

The QCS analysis highlights the need for additional research to determine the types of tire failures and why the Explorer tire-related fatal crashes continue to grow. But it is unlikely that NHTSA will help solve the mystery. Whitfield notes that the agency is hampering further research by withholding Early Warning Reporting data that could provide vital information. Despite initial agency statements that it would make death, injury, and property damage information available, the agency has refused to release the data, until a lawsuit filed by the Rubber Manufacturers Association to keep the information secret is resolved.

Figure 1. Occupant Deaths in Ford Explorers with Reported Tire Failures by Calendar Year.



Source: “NHTSA’s Secret Data and Ford Explorers in Fatal Post-recall, Tire-related Crashes” Quality Control Systems, Corp.

Two Tire Makers Add Tire Aging Replacement Guidelines for U.S. Market

(Cont. from p. 1)

Ford's addition of a 6-year age limit to its owner's manuals in 2005 gave an additional jolt to the Rubber Manufacturers Association (RMA), which continues to claim that there is no valid criteria for determining tire service life. In a recent presentation at a tire industry meeting, Ford research scientist Dr. John Baldwin claimed that the 6-year age limit was defensible and data driven, whereas Bridgestone-Firestone, Michelin, and Continental's 10-year position were not supported by any data. Dr. Baldwin also noted that Ford was requesting a NHTSA Consumer Advisory recommending a 6-year age limit to avoid confusion among consumers. Safety Research & Strategies first requested NHTSA consider issuing a consumer advisory in November 2004. In May 2005, following Ford's tire-aging recommenda-

tion, SRS asked the automaker to support SRS' push for a federal Consumer Advisory.

Regardless of the age recommendation, a lingering problem consumers face is how to decode the tire's age. The Tire Identification Number (TIN) contains a string of 10 or 11 alpha-numeric characters, of which the last three or four provide the week and year of manufacture. The TIN is molded on one side of the tire sidewall. For example, a 10 character TIN with "029" in the last three positions means the tire was made in the second week of 1999 (or 1989). After 2000 an additional digit was added. So, for example, a TIN with 11 characters ending in "0202" indicates the tire was made in the second week of 2002. To address this issue Safety Research & Strategies petitioned NHTSA in 2004 to require non-coded date of

manufacture molded onto both sides of the tire. SRS argued that a simple date of manufacture would not create a conflict with any future requirement and would only enhance the information already present. The agency has yet to address this petition.

According to Sean Kane, President of Safety Research & Strategies, "the recent spate of tire aging recommendations are a good start, but what is really needed is for manufacturers to label their tires with age expirations based on the specific construction of their product lines much the same way they provide tread wear guidelines of 30,000 or 40,000 miles for example."

SRS has been at the forefront of tire aging and its submissions to NHTSA showing industry knowledge of the problem continue to garner significant atten-

tion. Kane recently took his message directly to the industry, presenting the case for expiration dates at the Tire Expo 2006 in Stuttgart, Germany. Kane says "this issue has reached the tipping point—we now have three major tire makers who account for nearly 50% of all tires sold with tire age recommendations in the U.S., and others with recommendations in overseas markets. Most of the major automakers also provide recommendations. The next step is to find better ways of identifying a tire's age and its useable life—all of which can be addressed by the vehicle and tire makers."

The first tire aging case against a vehicle manufacturer, Ford Motor Company, in Nueces County, Texas resulted in a \$29 million verdict. Ford's expert Dr. John Baldwin testified that tire aging was not a safety issue.

Vehicle Mismatch Linked to Spinal Cord Injuries

Birmingham, AL—Researchers from the University of Alabama have concluded that vehicle compatibility is a significant factor contributing to spinal cord injuries, when the motor vehicle crash includes a light truck.

Using National Automotive Sampling System and Crashworthiness Data System, researchers examined 101,682 cases of cervical, lumbar or thoracic spinal cord injuries that occurred in two-vehicle crashes between 1995 and 2003. Their

results, published in the *Journal of Spinal Cord Medicine*, showed that the occupants of light trucks were at an increased risk of spinal cord injuries, regardless of the crash partner's vehicle type. In crashes with passenger cars, light truck occupants were at greater risk for spinal cord injuries in the cervical and lumbar regions. In crashes between light trucks, all occupants carried a greater risk of any type of spinal cord injury. Passenger car occupants were more likely to sus-

tain a thoracic spinal cord injury in a crash with a light truck.

The researchers did not find that vehicle curb weight influenced the risk for spinal cord injury, but speculated that such differences might be a significant factor when one of the crash partners is a light passenger car.

The study represents the first to examine vehicle mismatch as a potential risk factor for spinal cord injury. Its authors say that

the results have implications for the future design of light truck vehicles, given their popularity and the enormous economic burden of spinal cord injuries. In 1998, light trucks accounted for 42 percent of all new vehicle sales. Motor vehicle accidents account for 38 percent of all spinal cord injuries in the U.S. and the first-year health and living expenses can top \$683,000, with a lifetime price tag of more than \$1 million.



Federal Government Increasingly Uses Pre-Emption to Bypass State Laws

Consumer and state government groups are becoming alarmed at a surge of regulations and bills designed to protect industry, while usurping stronger state regulations and consumers' rights in state courts through pre-emption clauses and laws.

In the last seven months, three federal agencies -- the Food and Drug Administration, the Consumer Product Safety Commission and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration -- have either promulgated or passed regulations that explicitly overturn tougher state standards and shield manufacturers from lawsuits from victims seeking legal redress:

- On August, the NHTSA issued its first upgrade of the roof crush rule in 32 years. (*Safety Record*, V2 I4) The proposed rulemaking would increase the force that vehicles are required to withstand from 1.5 to 2.5 times their unloaded vehicle weight and replace the 22,240 Newton maximum force limit for passenger cars. The agency estimated that nearly three-quarters of the vehicles on the market already meet the proposed new standard and the standard would only prevent 13-44 fatalities, and about 500-800 non-fatal injuries.

- On January 6, the FDA finalized a drug-labeling rule, which, stated in its preamble, would prevent a consumer from suing a drug manufacturer over any drug the federal agency approves.

- On February 16, the CPSC issued a final rule on mattress flammability, limiting the fire intensity of a burning mattress for the first 30 minutes after ignition. The regulation purports to create more escape time, and estimates that it would prevent 270 deaths and

1,330 injuries a year. The new rule also immunizes manufacturers from claims in state courts, if their mattresses meet the new federal regulation.

More recently, Republicans in the Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives have been filing bills that would protect the food industry, durable goods and chemical manufacturers, the video rental industry and the financial services sector, wiping out consumer protections in the areas of food safety, identity theft, predatory lending, privacy, telecommunications and exposure to toxic chemicals.

U.S.P.I.R.G., which has been tracking such legislation, lists 15 such bills that are in various stages of the legislative process.

For example, this month, the House Passed the National Uniformity for Food Act, which pre-empts about 200 state food safety regulations. The bill gives the Food and Drug Administration the right to set food safety standards. States that wish to retain their strict standards would have to appeal to the FDA, which has 180 days to rule on them. As Washington Post columnist Harold Meyerson points out, the FDA does not have the money to review those statutes.

Five House and Senate bills related to notification when individuals' private electronic information is stolen would weaken the standard under which online companies would be required to notify consumers of a security breach. All five bills also contain language preempting any state notification laws.

Two bills now pending in the House financial services committee and the House subcom-

mittee on Housing and Community Opportunity pre-empt any state anti-predatory lending laws or any state attempts to regulate mortgage-lending.

"I'm getting a bill a week," says Susan Frederick, senior committee director for the National Conference of State Legislatures, including some which attempt to pre-empt states' Good Samaritan laws, and statutes of repose, which set time limits on the filing of lawsuits against durable goods manufacturers.

Joanne Doroshov, executive director of the Center for Justice & Democracy says that the strategy has been evolving over the last year or so. The federal government started by defending industry in the courts, by filing amicus briefs on behalf of corporate defendants in product liability cases. More recently, federal agencies charged with protecting the public have used a battering ram against states' ability to regulate in broad areas involving the health and safety of its citizens.

"I don't think some of this is constitutional," she said.

The NCSL could not take position on the CPSC mattress rule, Frederick said, because it was issued without warning, and because the commission is an independent agency and is not required to consult with other stakeholders before issuing a rule.

But the states' lobbying group has strongly opposed the NHTSA and FDA rulemakings because they tread on state sovereignty and because neither agency analyzed the impact of pre-emption on state budgets, as they are required to do under a federal executive order. In the case of the FDA, the NCSL was

informed at the eleventh hour that the drug-labeling rule could have some effect on the states. The group raised its objections, but "it was a done deal and out the door," Frederick said. "We had no impact on the way that rule came out."

"There's going to be additional costs to the states," Frederick added. "And we can only imagine what that they will be if people can't recoup injury and loss costs. The most logical place to look is state and local government services. It's an unfunded mandate and self-governance is being eroded."

Some experts believe that a court challenge to some of these pre-emption clauses is inevitable. In the meantime, consumer and state government groups are working on a strategy to counter the wholesale effort to enact weak national standards that endanger consumers.

Some of the nation's largest newspapers, such as the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and the *L.A. Times*, and popular syndicated columnist Molly Ivins have begun writing about the trend. But most of the activity is going on under the radar of the average consumer, says Alison Cassady, senior research director for U.S.P.I.R.G.

"It's a hard story to tell," she says. "It doesn't have the same resonance as hot button issues like abortion or immigration, but this problem threatens states' ability to protect their citizens and we are trying really hard to get the message out."

Ford Throttle Cable Recall Still Leaves Millions at Risk for Unintended Acceleration

Detroit, MI -- Two juries have held Ford responsible for a deadly design flaw in the cruise control systems of millions of Ford vehicles, but the automaker has only recalled a fraction of the affected vehicles, leaving motorists vulnerable to episodes of unintended acceleration.

The defect is the actuator cable design of Ford's Next Generation Speed Control, which first appeared in 1991 models and, by 1995, was installed in all of the automaker's passenger vehicles, SUVs and light trucks with cruise control. As Ford engineers noted in their Failure Mode and Effects Analysis, over time, the speed control actuator cable can become contaminated with dirt, grease or water where it enters the sheath, or "adjuster body" and bind in the open position, prohibiting the driver from closing the throttle and decreasing speed.

In March 1999, Ford announced that it had found a manufacturing defect with the cruise control cable and recalled 898,739 Explorers, Rangers, Mustangs, Mountaineers and some F-series trucks in model years ranging from 1997 to 1999, with certain build dates. But internal documents indicate that problem may be more widespread and could be related to other causes.

For motorists, such as Kenneth Woddail, of St. Louis, Missouri, the result was a frightening experience and the threat of imminent injury or death, which he described to Ford CEO Alex Trotman in a letter:

"The cruise control "froze" on at 70 miles per hour and neither the brake pedal or the "off" button would deactivate it," Woddail wrote.

Woddail described numerous attempts to turn off the speed control as he pressed on the brake with as much force as he could muster. Eventually, he was able to wrestle the car to 40 miles an hour, when the speed control finally disengaged.

"I want to be very clear about the next point. I am 6'3", weigh 220 pounds, and was only barely able to overcome the cruise control's constant increase of throttle to maintain speed. At no point during the process was I safely in control of the vehicle and we were fortunate to escape without an accident," Woddail wrote.

Other Ford owners have not been so fortunate. Richard Olson died in September 17, 2002 when the throttle of his 1998 Ford Explorer stuck in the open position, and his vehicle crashed into a tree. Jennifer Huber, 14, of West Virginia died and her mother was severely injured on August 17, 1999 when a stuck throttle caused Joan Huber to lose control of her 1998 Lincoln Town Car and crash into a rock embankment. In both cases, juries found that the Next Generation Speed Control system was defective and that Ford was negligent in designing and selling it.

Yet, Ford has done little to resolve the issue. Internal documents presented by attorney Edgar "Hike" Heiskell III in *Olson v. Ford*, show that as far back as the design process, speed control engineers knew cable contamination could result in the throttle sticking open, and characterized that possibility as a severe failure. Engineers also predicted that the condition was unlikely to occur. But thousands of complaints from consumers about stuck throttles and sudden ac-

celerations and even the experiences of one of its own executives have proven otherwise.

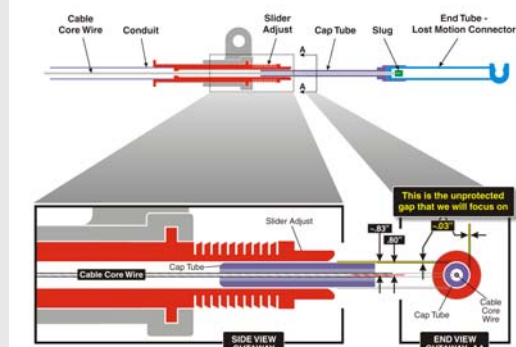
"Anyone who has a Ford from 1995, can have that cable removed and radically decrease the chances of that happening, because Mr. Olson died when the speed control wasn't engaged," says attorney Edgar "Hike" Heiskell III, who successfully represented the estates of Richard Olson and Joan Huber. "It's a mechanical cable and it doesn't care if speed control is or isn't on. The whole system can be off and that cable can stick with the throttle in the open position."

Even as Ford blamed the supplier that manufactured the cable, the company's investigating engineers reported that a defective cable could explain only some of the incidents and it was possible that more than one root cause existed, including "core wire sticks to liner," "kinked core wire," "cable bound in liner," "frayed core wire," "freezing temp," "insufficient water entry protection," "cable adjuster body not secure to acceleration bracket," "cable not seated on servo," "slug inserted backwards on servo," "core wire mis-routed on servo cap," "excessive flash on core wire slug," "conduit wires jam pulley," and "clutch dumped not driven." In an in-

ternal memo, one engineer, Paul Stokes, urged the company to investigate further

According to one of Ford's lawyers, 26 million vehicles use this design. Since 1999, Ford has recalled numerous makes and models as far back as the 1991 model year for sticky throttle problems attributed to a variety of causes, including: 2000 Focus cars; 1998 Contours; 1999-2000 F-Series Super Duty; 1998 Mercury Mystique; 2002 Focus SVT Hatchbacks; 1991-1995 Taurus and Sables; 1997 Aerostars; 2001 Ford Escapes, 2000 and 2001 Explorers; 2001 Explorer Sports, 2001 Mazda Tributes, 2001 and 2002 Mazda MVPs.

The automaker has had numerous problems with the Next Generation Speed Control system, including cruise control deactivation switch fires that have prompted three separate recalls. In July 2005, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Office of Defects Investigations opened a preliminary probe into stuck throttle complaints on 2002 Explorers and Mountaineers. Ford said that it had identified a faulty wire in the accelerator cable, but had remedied the problem by changing the wire design. ODI closed the investigation without further action in November 2005.



NHTSA Proposes NCAP Rating Label, But Will Consumers Learn Anything?

Washington, D.C. — The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has unveiled its new crash test ratings label, but the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety says that the information is of little value to consumers.

As mandated by the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), the agency is required to publish safety rating information. On Jan. 30, NHTSA posted a notice of proposed rulemaking, setting the effective date of the label requirement for September 1, 2007. The results of the agency's side, frontal and rollover crash testing from its New Car Assessment Program (NCAP) will appear as a five-star rating system on the automobile price sticker.

But the IIHS has petitioned the agency to also consider directing consumers to its website on the label, because nearly all cars are highly rated under NCAP. When the program first

started in 1978, it provided the only crash test information available to consumers and provided manufacturers with an incentive to improve their models crashworthiness, the institute said. Research shows that accidents and injuries have declined in result.

But, the IIHS argued, the meaning of those ratings diminished over time. It quoted from a 2005 General Accounting Office report noting that the program no longer seemed to meet its goal of improving vehicle safety. "Because all vehicles today receive four- and five-star side and frontal impact safety ratings, NCAP provides little incentive for manufacturers to further improve the safety of their vehicles and does not provide consumers with information that differentiates the safety of one vehicle from another."

The IIHS said that its tests were more stringent, and better indicators of a vehicle's ability to withstand real world crash

forces. For example, 27 vehicles were rated poorly under the IIHS side impact tests, but NCAP gave four- or five-star ratings to 21 of them. The IIHS also offers consumers information on seat and head restraint

designs in rear impact crashes—something the NCAP doesn't measure, the institute said.

GOVERNMENT SAFETY RATINGS

Frontal Driver	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Crash Passenger	★ ★ ★ ★

Star ratings based on the risk of injury in a frontal impact. Frontal ratings should ONLY be compared to other vehicles of similar size and weight.

Side Front seat	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ▲
Crash Rear seat	Not Rated

Star ratings based on the risk of injury in a side impact.

Rollover ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Star ratings based on the risk of rollover in a single vehicle crash.

Star ratings range from 1 to 5 stars (★ ★ ★ ★ ★), with 5 being the highest.

▲ Safety concern: Visit www.safercar.gov for more details.

Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)

VISIT www.safercar.gov

Shock and Awe Parents Into Keeping Kids Safe

Those child safety seat brochures featuring cuddly infants nestled snugly in their five-point restraints, though well meaning, do little to persuade caregivers to properly restrain children. Instead, child safety campaigns would do better to scare parents into doing the right thing, says a researcher at the Eastern Virginia Medical School's Center for Pediatric Research.

In a recent edition of *Accident Prevention and Analysis*, Kelli England Will argues that safety advocates cannot hope to boost the numbers of children who ride in the most appropriate seat that is properly installed until they change tactics.

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for children, ages 1 to 14, killing 2,197 children and injuring another 267,000. Yet, less than 60 percent of children, ages 5-11, are restrained at all and 85 of parents unknowingly misuse child safety seats. Well publicized, free and convenient child safety seat checks draw scant crowds—even when a popular toy is used as an incentive.

Several previous studies have documented the source of this apathy: most parents don't attend because they don't think they need to. Either they believed that they had properly installed the safety seat or they

had misperceived the vulnerability of their children to injury and death in a car crash. Will says effective safety campaigns must address the latter attitude.

Education alone does not work, because people routinely agonize over unlikely events, such as a terrorist attack, but minimize the dangers of more immediate threats, such as car accidents. Safety messages must counter human nature by raising the danger profile of children in motor vehicle crashes, coupled with an emphasis on the ease of adopting precautions, Will says. Rather than relying on dry statistics, campaigns should feature pic-

tures of a crash's aftermath and tell personal stories of tragedy to motivate parents to change behavior.

"In short, effective messages should shock and surprise parents into paying attention to something they would normally dismiss as unimportant," Will concludes.

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Safety Advocates Cry Foul After NHTSA Weakens Snow Tire Standard

(Cont. from p. 2)

eliminate the practicability and cost concerns," the agency said.

But Donaldson says that the ruling raises more questions than it answers. The agency's concerns about the dangers of chunking were not based on any field-testing, by its own admission. The agency failed to explain how it could guarantee the safety benefits and the apparent contradiction in recognizing the dangers of tire chunking, but lowering the standard. "They have no data to support the regulatory action," he says.
