

and least burdensome alternative that achieves the objectives of the rule and is consistent with statutory requirements. Section 203 requires EPA to establish a plan for informing and advising any small governments that may be significantly or uniquely impacted by the rule.

EPA has determined that the proposed action does not include a Federal mandate that may result in estimated annual costs of \$100 million or more to either State, local, or tribal governments in the aggregate, or to the private sector. Because EPA is not imposing new Federal requirements, neither State, local, or tribal governments, nor the private sector should incur costs from this action.

**Authority:** 42 U.S.C. 7401 *et seq.*

### List of Subjects

#### 40 CFR Part 52

Environmental protection, Air pollution control, Particulate matter.

#### 40 CFR Part 81

Environmental protection, Air pollution control, National parks, Wilderness areas, Air quality control regions.

Dated: October 19, 1998.

**Chuck Clarke,**

*Regional Administrator, Region 10.*

[FR Doc. 98-28620 Filed 10-23-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6560-50-U

### ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

#### 40 CFR Part 721

[OPPTS-50628D; FRL-6041-2]

RIN 2070-AB27

#### Proposed Significant New Use Rule; Extension of Comment Period

**AGENCY:** Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

**ACTION:** Proposed rule; Extension of comment period.

**SUMMARY:** EPA is extending the comment period for the proposed significant new use rule (SNUR) for twelve chemical substances. As initially published in the **Federal Register** of September 9, 1998 (63 FR 48157) (FRL-6020-8) the comments were to be received on or before October 9, 1998. One commenter requested additional time to research and submit more detailed comments concerning two of the proposed SNURs. EPA is therefore extending the comment period 30 days in order to give all interested persons the opportunity to comment fully.

**DATES:** Written comments must be submitted to EPA by November 9, 1998.

**ADDRESSES:** Each comment must bear the appropriate docket control number OPPTS-50628C. All comments should be sent in triplicate to: OPPT Document Control Officer (7407), Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics, Environmental Protection Agency, 401 M St., SW., Rm. G-099, East Tower, Washington, DC 20460.

Comments and data may also be submitted electronically to: [oppt.ncic@epa.gov](mailto:oppt.ncic@epa.gov). Follow the instructions under Unit I. of this document. No Confidential Business Information (CBI) should be submitted through e-mail.

All comments which contain information claimed as CBI must be clearly marked as such. Three sanitized copies of any comments containing information claimed as CBI must also be submitted and will be placed in the public record for this proposed rule. Persons submitting information on any portion of which they believe is entitled to treatment as CBI by EPA must assert a business confidentiality claim in accordance with 40 CFR 2.203(b) for each portion. This claim must be made at the time that the information is submitted to EPA. If a submitter does not assert a confidentiality claim at the time of submission, EPA will consider this as a waiver of any confidentiality claim and the information may be made available to the public by EPA without further notice to the submitter.

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Susan B. Hazen, Director, Environmental Assistance Division (7408), Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics, Environmental Protection Agency, Rm. E-531, 401 M St., SW., Washington, DC 20460, telephone: (202) 554-1404, TDD: (202) 554-0551; e-mail: [TSCA-Hotline@epa.gov](mailto:TSCA-Hotline@epa.gov).

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

**Electronic Availability:** Electronic copies of this document are available from the EPA Home Page at the **Federal Register**-Environmental Documents entry for this document under "Laws and Regulations" (<http://www.epa.gov/fedrstr/>).

This extension of the comment period will allow interested parties who intend to comment on the proposed rule additional time to consider their response.

#### I. Public Record and Electronic Submissions

The official record for this proposed rule, as well as the public version, has been established for this proposed rule under docket control number OPPTS-

50628C (including comments and data submitted electronically as described below). A public version of this record, including printed, paper versions of electronic comments, which does not include any information claimed as CBI, is available for inspection from 12 noon to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding legal holidays. The official rulemaking record is located in the TSCA Nonconfidential Information Center, Rm. NE-B607, 401 M St., SW., Washington, DC.

Electronic comments can be sent directly to EPA at: [oppt.ncic@epa.gov](mailto:oppt.ncic@epa.gov)

Electronic comments must be submitted as an ASCII file avoiding the use of special characters and any form of encryption. Comments and data will also be accepted on disks in WordPerfect 5.1/6.1 or ASCII file format. All comments and data in electronic form must be identified by the docket control number OPPTS-50628C. Electronic comments on this proposed rule may be filed online at many Federal Depository Libraries.

#### List of Subjects in 40 CFR Part 721

Environmental protection, Chemicals, Hazardous substances, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements.

Dated: October 19, 1998.

**Ward Penberthy,**

*Acting Director, Chemical Control Division, Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics.*

[FR Doc. 98-28619 Filed 10-23-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6560-50-F

### DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

#### National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

#### 49 CFR Part 571

[Docket Number NHTSA-98-4573]

#### School Bus Research Plan

**AGENCY:** National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), DOT.

**ACTION:** Request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** On August 7, 1998, NHTSA sent to Congress a report titled, "School Bus Safety: Safe Passage for America's Children." The report outlined NHTSA's current and future actions on school bus safety. A comprehensive research plan for the next generation of occupant protection in school buses was announced. This notice seeks comments

and information pertinent to the execution of that plan. A copy of this report is available on NHTSA's web site at: <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/buses/schbus/schbussafe.html>.

Every year, approximately 440,000 public school buses travel about 4.3 billion miles to transport 23.5 million children to and from school and school-related activities. The school bus occupant fatality rate of 0.2 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles traveled (VMT) is much lower than the rates for passenger cars (1.5 per 100 million VMT) or light trucks and vans (1.3 per 100 million VMT). School bus transportation is one of the safest forms of transportation in the United States. On average, nine school bus occupants per year die in school bus crashes. While each of these fatalities is tragic, the numbers of fatalities among school bus occupants are extremely small when compared to those in other types of motor vehicles. For example, in 1997, five passenger occupants in a school bus body-type of vehicle died in a crash. During the same year, 4,811 children between the ages of 5 and 18 died in all other types of motor vehicles.

This excellent safety record of school buses notwithstanding, NHTSA believes that school transportation should be held to the highest levels of safety, since such transportation involves the Nation's most precious cargo—children who represent our future.

Even though compartmentalization has proven to be an excellent concept for injury mitigation, the agency has initiated an extensive research program to develop the next generation occupant protection system. The objective of NHTSA's Research Plan is to scientifically determine the real-world effectiveness of current Federal requirements for school bus occupant crash protection, evaluate alternative occupant crash protection systems in controlled laboratory tests that represent the types of real-world school bus crashes, and based on the findings, propose the next generation of occupant protection requirements for school buses. Each system studied must meet all of the following criteria: is likely to reduce the total number of injuries or fatalities associated with school bus crashes, provides protection to the whole range of occupants who are transported in schools buses, is technologically feasible, is reasonable in cost, and does not substantially reduce the occupant capacity of school buses or substantially inhibit emergency evacuation.

**DATES:** Comments must be received by December 28, 1998.

All written comments should refer to the docket number and notice number in the heading of this notice and be submitted, preferably 10 copies, to: DOT Docket Management Facility, U.S. Department of Transportation, Room PL-01, 400 7th Street, SW, Washington, DC 20590. The docket is open to the public from 10:00 am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Linda McCray, Office of Vehicle Safety Research, NRD-11, NHTSA, 400 7th Street, SW, Washington, DC 20590 (telephone 202-366-6375, Fax: 202-366-7237).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The primary means of occupant protection for large school buses is a concept known as compartmentalization—strong, well padded, well anchored, high backed, closely spaced seats. Even though compartmentalization has proven to be an excellent concept for injury mitigation, the agency has initiated a research program to develop the next generation of occupant protection for school bus passengers. This comprehensive program will evaluate alternative occupant crash protection systems in controlled laboratory tests that represent the types of real world school bus crashes that produce injuries to passengers. A key component of this program will necessarily be a thorough search for better crash data. Existing state and school systems records will be searched for documentation on school bus crashes involving fatalities/injuries and specific crashes in which lap belts were used. Those crash data will be vital to defining the test conditions that best simulate the most injurious school bus crashes. Alternative systems will be tested and evaluated for their ability to protect the full range of sizes of school bus occupants. The systems tested must not significantly reduce the occupant capacity of the bus or significantly restrict emergency egress. If it is determined that all these criteria can be met, the agency will consider upgrading its occupant protection standards.

#### **School Bus Research Plan**

Research will be conducted in three (3) phases: Phase I—Problem Definition, Phase II—Test Procedure Development, and Phase III—Testing and Validation.

*Phase I: Problem Definition* will consist of analyzing NHTSA's Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS), General Estimates System (GES) and National Automotive Sampling System databases for school bus crashes and corresponding injuries, a literature search for existing school bus related

research (listed above), identification of safety systems that are currently available or will be in near term, and in-depth special investigations of existing state and school system records on bus crashes involving fatalities/injuries and specific crashes in which occupants wore lap belts. The agency will conduct a detailed review of crash data to upgrade existing data to better define crashes that produce injury to occupants. The answers to the following items will be of help to the agency in determining its future course of action with respect to school buses.

1. While the agency believes that it is aware of most of the research that evaluates the occupant protection in school buses, the agency is interested in research reports that documents the testing of safety devices or systems in modern school buses.
2. The agency is interested in investigating crashes that have occurred in large school buses, particularly those crashes that have resulted in injuries, and is asking for assistance in locating detailed information on these school bus crashes.
3. The agency is also interested in investigating crashes that have occurred in large and small school buses equipped with lap belts and is asking for assistance in locating detailed information on these school bus crashes.

*Phase II: Test Procedure Development* will consist of developing test conditions that best simulate the types of school bus crashes that lead to serious injuries, as identified through Phase I research. Crash "pulses" will be developed by conducting full scale school bus crash testing at various impact angles. Using the derived crash pulses, a sled test procedure (crash simulation) will be developed and validated. If necessary, new occupant protection countermeasures will be designed and developed, either by modifying existing systems and components, or developing new systems. Preliminary tests to verify the systems will be conducted prior to final sled testing. A sled test matrix to evaluate the new or altered occupant protection systems will be developed.

In order to ensure that any safety enhancements/devices tested provide protection to the whole range of sizes of people that school buses transport, the agency is planning to use available anthropometric test dummies (ATDs) that represent the six-year-old child, the 5th percentile female and the 50th percentile male.

Safety improvements currently under consideration for testing are lap belts, lap/torso belts, lap bars, bus side wall padding and armrests.

4. Since lap belts have been required in small school buses for some time now, the

agency is also interested in obtaining information on whether there have been any lap belt-caused injuries to occupants of small school buses.

5. The agency is concerned that widening of a school bus seat to allow for the placement of armrests will require that the school bus body be made wider in order to maintain the same capacity. Should this be a serious concern, it is important for the agency to know the extent to which the widening of the school bus seat would cause the capacity to be reduced or the widening of school bus body would cause maneuverability problems.

The agency is also interested in obtaining information on other devices/systems that may improve occupant protection in school bus crashes. Please note, NHTSA does not have legal authority to provide appropriated funds for the private development of commercial products. Suggestions should be accompanied by a statement of the rationale for the suggested device/system and the expected consequences that such devices/systems will have on school bus transportation. Suggestions should address at least the following considerations:

- Administrative/compliance burdens,
- Cost effectiveness,
- Costs of the existing regulation and the proposed changes to consumers,
- Costs of testing or certification to regulated parties,
- Effects on safety,
- Effects on small businesses,
- Enforceability of the standard, and
- Whether the suggestion reflects a "common sense" approach to solving the problem

Statements should be as specific as possible and provide the best available supporting information. Statements also should specify whether any change recommended in the regulatory process would require a legislative change in NHTSA's authority.

*Phase III: Testing and Validation* will consist of testing the various occupant protection safety systems developed or identified. The types of tests to be conducted will be both static and dynamic. Test results will be analyzed and a final report published.

In order to provide for a more controlled environment the agency is planning to evaluate each device/system by conducting crash simulations (sled tests).

#### Submission of Comments

NHTSA invites written comments from all interested parties. It is requested but not required that 10 copies be submitted.

If a commenter wishes to submit certain information under a claim of confidentiality, three copies of the

complete submission, including purportedly confidential business information, should be submitted to the Chief Counsel, NHTSA, Room 5219, at the street address given above, and copies from which the purportedly confidential information has been deleted should be submitted to the Docket Section. A request for confidentiality should be accompanied by a cover letter setting forth the information specified in the agency's confidential business information regulation (49 CFR part 512.)

All comments received before the close of business on the comment closing date indicated above will be considered. Comments will be available for inspection in the docket.

After the closing date, NHTSA will continue to file relevant information in the docket as it becomes available. It is therefore recommended that interested persons continue to examine the docket for new material.

**Authority:** 49 U.S.C. 322, 30111, 30115, 30117, and 30166; delegation of authority at 49 CFR 1.50.

Issued: October 20, 1998.

**L. Robert Shelton,**

*Associate Administrator for Safety Performance Standards.*

[FR Doc. 98-28569 Filed 10-23-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-59-P

## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

### National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

#### 49 CFR Parts 571, 585, 587, and 595

[Docket No. NHTSA 98-4405, Notice 2]

#### Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards; Occupant Crash Protection

**AGENCY:** National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), DOT.

**ACTION:** Notice of public meeting.

**SUMMARY:** We are issuing this document to announce that we will be holding a public meeting on technical issues relating to our proposal to require advanced air bags. The purposes of our public meeting are to review and discuss our technical paper on proposed injury criteria; and our technical paper on crash tests and other tests.

**DATES:** We will hold the public meeting on November 23 and 24, 1998, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. If you wish to participate in the meeting, please contact Clarke Harper, at the address or telephone number listed below, by November 12, 1998. If you plan to present a statement during the meeting,

please provide a copy of your statement to Mr. Harper by November 16, 1998.

**ADDRESSES:** We will hold the public meeting in room 2230 of the Nassif Building, 400 Seventh St., S.W., Washington, D.C. 20590.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Clarke Harper, Office of Crashworthiness Standards, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 400 Seventh St., S.W., Washington, D.C., 20590 (telephone 202-366-2264; fax 202-493-2739).

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

##### Background

##### A. Summary of Proposal for Advanced Air Bags

On September 18, 1998, we published in the **Federal Register** (63 FR 49958) a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) to upgrade Standard No. 208, Occupant Crash Protection, to require advanced air bags. The advanced air bags would be required in some new passenger cars and light trucks beginning September 1, 2002, and in all new cars and light trucks beginning September 1, 2005.

The goal of our proposal is to preserve and enhance the benefits of air bags while minimizing the risks. We are proposing to add a new set of requirements to prevent air bags from causing serious injuries and to expand the existing set of requirements intended to improve the ability of air bags to cushion and protect occupants in frontal crashes.

Our proposals include several new performance requirements to ensure that the advanced air bags do not pose unreasonable risks to out-of-position occupants. To ensure that the new air bags are designed to avoid causing serious injury to a broad array of occupants, we would test the air bags using test dummies representing 12-month-old, 3-year-old, and 6-year-old children and 5th percentile adult females.

We are also proposing requirements that would improve the ability of air bags to cushion and protect a broader array of belted and unbelted occupants, including small women. The standard's current dynamic crash test requirements specify the use of 50th percentile adult male dummies only. Under our proposal, we would also use 5th percentile adult female dummies in the future. The weight and size of these dummies are representative of not only small women, but also many teenagers.

We are proposing to phase out the current unbelted sled test option as requirements for advanced air bags are phased in. This would mean that vehicles with advanced air bags would