

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

be required to be certified to the unbelted barrier test at speeds up to and including 30 mph.

Finally, we are proposing new and/or upgraded injury criteria for all of the standard's test requirements. For example, we have developed injury criteria and seat positioning procedures that we believe are appropriate for small females. Among other things, we are including neck injury criteria, since persons close to the air bag at deployment are at greater risk of neck injury. We are also proposing to upgrade the current chest injury criteria.

B. Technical Papers

In support of our proposal to require advanced air bags, our Office of Research and Development prepared two technical papers. One paper is titled "Development of Improved Injury Criteria for the Assessment of Advanced Automotive Restraint Systems." This paper documents the proposed injury criteria for specified body regions, including both the rationale and performance limits associated with them for all the various size dummies included in the proposal.

The second paper is titled "Review of Potential Test Procedures for FMVSS No. 208." This paper reviews potential test procedures for evaluating frontal crashworthiness, including full frontal fixed barrier tests, oblique frontal fixed barrier tests, sled tests with a generic crash pulse, frontal fixed offset deformable barrier tests, perpendicular moving deformable barrier tests, oblique moving deformable barrier tests, and full frontal fixed deformable barrier tests.

Public Meeting

A. Purposes

The purposes of the meeting are to review and discuss—

- our technical paper on proposed injury criteria; and
- our technical paper on crash tests and other tests.

B. Procedural Matters and Agenda

We will devote the first day, November 23, to our technical paper on proposed injury criteria and related issues. The second day, November 24, will be devoted to our technical paper on crash tests and other tests and related issues. If you plan to present a statement on the second technical paper, please address the following question in your statement: Which tests best replicate what happens in motor vehicles during

those real world crashes that can cause serious or fatal injury?

To the extent that participants recommend alternatives to our proposal, we request that they be as specific as possible. We particularly request that any participants recommending an alternative to the unbelted barrier test address the issues raised by Question 22 in the NPRM for advanced air bags (63 FR at 49982), and by the questions in the Appendix to that NPRM at the end of section C (63 FR at 50020).

Each day will have two sessions. Each day's morning session will begin with a brief presentation by the agency, followed by presentations by public participants concerning technical issues. We will determine the time available for individual presentations based on the number of persons who submit requests to participate by the November 12 deadline. We encourage parties with similar points of view to coordinate their presentations to avoid duplication.

No opportunity will be afforded the public to directly question participants in the meetings. However, the public may submit written questions to the presiding panel of Federal officials for the panel to consider asking of particular participants. The presiding officials reserve the right to ask questions of all persons making oral presentations.

The agenda for the public meeting is set forth below:

Agenda for Public Meeting on Advanced Air Bags

Day One

I. Introduction

Agency presentation—Brief overview of NPRM and supporting technical papers

II. Technical paper on proposed injury criteria

- A. Agency presentation summarizing its paper analyzing the criteria
- B. Presentation by public of prepared statements

Day Two

III. Technical paper on crash tests and other tests—Which tests best replicate what happens in real world crashes that can cause serious or fatal injury?

- A. Agency presentation summarizing its paper analyzing the tests
- B. Presentation by public of prepared statements

To facilitate communication, we will provide auxiliary aids (e.g., sign-

language interpreter, braille materials, large print materials and/or a magnifying device) to participants as necessary, during the meeting. Any person desiring assistance of auxiliary aids should contact Mr. Harper no later than 10 days before the meeting. For any presentation that will include slides, motion pictures, or other visual aids, the presenters should bring at least one copy to the meeting so that we can readily include the material in the public record.

We will place a copy of any written statement in the docket for this rulemaking. In addition, we will make a verbatim record of the public meeting and place a copy in the docket.

C. Availability of Relevant Documents

The September 18 proposal for advanced air bags and the two technical papers have been placed in the docket. You may either visit the docket in Washington, DC, or by the Web.

The docket is located at Room PL-401, 400 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, DC.. Docket hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. The Docket Management website is at "<http://dms.dot.gov/>". You should search for docket number 4405.

The September 18 proposal (typewritten version) and the two technical papers are also available on NHTSA's website. The address for this site is "<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/>". You should select "Advanced Air Bags" under "Popular Information."

D. Written Comments

If you wish to submit written comments on the issues discussed at the meeting, please combine them with your written comments on our September 18 proposal for advanced air bags. The comment closing date for written comments on the proposal is December 17, 1998. We set forth procedures related to the submission of written comments in our proposal.

List of Subjects in 49 CFR Part 571

Imports, Motor vehicle safety, Motor vehicles.

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

Issued on: October 20, 1998.

L. Robert Shelton,

Associate Administrator for Safety Performance Standards.

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