

Steed Ordered To Turn Over All Papers On Rollover Petition

U.S. Representative Tom Luken, Ohio Democrat, wants to know whether Diane Steed, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) administrator, vetoed her staff's recommendation that she begin rulemaking on a rollover standard.

Citing reports that four of NHTSA's major department heads recommended last summer that Steed open rulemaking, Luken, who heads the House Subcommittee on Transportation, Tourism, and Hazardous Materials, says NHTSA has refused to respond to press inquiries as to whether she vetoed the staff recommendation to grant a petition initiated by Senator Timothy Wirth seeking a rollover safety standard. (See *Status Report*, Vol. 23, No. 7, July 9, 1988.)

In a letter signed by Luken and Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman John Dingell, Steed was asked: "Was such a recommendation made? Did you veto it?"

"A warning label . . . may not be enough. NHTSA's recent report to Congress showed that in 1986 the death rate from rollovers for utility vehicles was more than double that for passenger cars."

If so, why? Please provide us with a copy of all internal letters, notes, memoranda, studies, etc., in NHTSA and departmental files concerning the issue of rollover from January 1985 to the present. This should include the above recommendation and all relevant documents."

Luken notes that an April 1988 report by NHTSA concluded utility vehicles "roll over two to three times more often" than automobiles. Luken says there are about five million utility vehicles in the United States and they now account for about 6 percent



Steed: Vetoed staff recommendations?

of annual sales, up from 2 percent 10 years ago.

"The subcommittee, both from an oversight and legislative standpoint, is continuing to examine, in some detail, the actions and any alleged inactions of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration," the letter says.

NHTSA has required utility vehicles to carry a warning label since 1984. It says "if you make sharp turns or abrupt maneuvers, the vehicle may rollover or may go out of control and crash." In addition to the label, Steed announced the agency was providing a consumer pamphlet on the precautions drivers should take with utility vehicles.

"A warning label and a pamphlet may not be enough," declares Luken. "NHTSA's recent report to Congress showed that in 1986 the death rate from rollovers for utility vehicles was more than double that for passenger cars. We intend to find out why NHTSA is not doing more than simply requiring a warning label and issuing a pamphlet."

Luken and Dingell also asked about a number of other vehicle safety issues, including a request for more information on which light trucks do not meet a roof crush standard that applies to passenger cars.

Two Studies Question Motorcycle Program

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20-hour training program in addition to passing the MOST II driving skill test. Analyses performed up to two years after the application and licensure dates showed no impact of the educational and testing programs on motorcycle crashes.

Impact on the other measures, including motorcycle convictions and total accidents and convictions, they say, was also found not to be significant. Following the study's conclusion, the New York motor vehicle department "did not continue using the MOST II test," says Frank Conley, the department's director of research.

Copies of "Licensing Novice Motorcyclists: A Comparison of the Traffic Safety Impact of California's Standard Test and the MOST II Administered at Centralized Testing Offices," by Shara Lynn Kelsey, Catharine Liddicoat, and Michael Ratz, may be obtained from the National Technical Information Service, Springfield, Va. 22161.

Cyclists' Injuries: Families and Society Pay a High Price

Approximately 1,000 persons die in motorcycle crashes each year in the United States. And for every motorcyclist killed, many others suffer injuries that require medical attention.

Who pays for the motorcyclists' medical care and rehabilitation? A study at a major trauma center shows the financial burden is not restricted to the motorcyclists or their families.

In fact researchers at the Harborview Medical Center in Seattle, serving Washington, Alaska, Idaho and Montana, found that public funds paid for 63 percent of the care provided to injured motorcyclists during a follow-up period averaging 20 months.