

Passenger car black boxes make for privacy debate

Since 1997, North American passenger cars and SUVs have had crash data recording systems. Some view this as a privacy/"big brother" intrusion on privacy others see it as an important advancement in auto safety. Rusty Haight of the Collision Safety Institute is prepared to offer insightful information on the system and debate and discuss privacy and related issues.

(PRWEB) February 16, 2004 --Imagine driving down a road when suddenly a car pulls out from a side street in front of you. While there seems to be no time to react you try, hitting the brakes, skidding briefly but your car still slams into the side of the other car. Air bags go off, the police, fire and EMS arrive. In the aftermath of a crash, there may be criminal charges brought against one driver or even both drivers. There are apt to be civil law suits involving the drivers, as well as government agencies. There may be both private industry and public agency inquiries into the how and way of the crash in an effort to make transportation safer.

A new tool used by the police and both private and public crash researchers is the automobile Event Data Recorder (EDR) or passenger car "black box." Installed in most passenger cars and SUVs sold in North America since 1997, the EDR is similar to the aircraft Flight Data Recorder (FDR) in that it captures certain vehicle operation parameters (for example, vehicle speed and seat belt use in some vehicles) as a function of that crash.

Although installed at the urging of the US Department of Transportation's National Transportation Safety Board's (NTSB) and a topic that remains on their "Most Wanted Safety Recommendations as adopted May 15, 2001," the addition of this component in cars is seemingly shrouded with mystery and surely cloaked in misunderstanding as many look at it as an unwarranted invasion of privacy, monitoring driver behavior without their knowledge. (See: http://www.charleston.net/stories/062903/wor_29black.shtml) The Collision Safety Institute position is that this is not a privacy issue but rather an important safety advancement and has worked against what has become law - however effective or ineffective - in California on this subject (see: <http://www.accidentreconstruction.com/newsletter/jan04/cdr.asp>).

The technology is an important safety tool, but some see it as either a way for the auto manufacturers to defend themselves in law suits or a tool the police and prosecutors will use against drivers. (See: <http://www.azcentral.com/specials/special17/articles/0127obrien27.html>) The reality is, of course, that for every driver it works against there's another driver it will work for - it is objective and real evidence like a tire mark or a damaged car.

In the final analysis, crash data recording systems in cars will work to improve traffic safety in two significant and measurable ways (1) by providing government and industry safety experts with objective crash information they can use to make cars, roads and drivers safer and (2) by altering driver behavior through the knowledge that these data collection systems are in place in cars.

To that end, Mr W. R. "Rusty" Haight will be available for interviews or discussions on the many important and potentially contentious issues related to this technology.

Mr Haight is a widely known traffic crash researcher and expert (bio attached or see: http://www.collisionsafety.net/Documents/A_Rusty_Bio.pdf) and is the Director of the Collision Safety Institute, an independent traffic collision research, training and consulting center. CSI's mission is to provide

state-of-the-art training and technology transfer to both public and private entities involved in the analysis and evaluation of motor vehicle collisions, provide technical support to professional associations and organizations in their training efforts and conduct testing and research on surface vehicle collision topics and related technology.

Mr Haight has been featured on numerous television and radio programs including ABC News 20/20 segments and others where he has conducted topical crash tests. His crash test history earned him recent print recognition in *Men's Journal* (see: <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,111184,00.html>).

Mr Haight can be reached at 858.484.9795 or on his mobile at 619.804.7385. He can provide video of crash tests as well as exemplar air bag modules which might be used in a discussion of this topic.

###

**Contact Information****W. R. Rusty Haight**

Collision Safety Institute

<http://www.collisionsafety.net>

858 484 9795

Online Web 2.0 VersionYou can read the online version of this press release [here](#).