



U.S. Department  
of Transportation  
**National Highway  
Traffic Safety  
Administration**

# NHTSA NOW

Volume 7, No. 2

February 12, 2001

## NHTSA Announces First Rollover Resistance Ratings

**Tuesday, January 9, 2001. Washington, DC.** The Department of Transportation announced the first rollover resistance ratings for passenger vehicles as NHTSA finalized a rating program that provides consumers with a measure of a vehicle's resistance to rolling over in a single vehicle crash. The intent is to provide consumers with information about the comparative rollover risk of various types of vehicles to better choose a safe vehicle for themselves and their family.

The program gives "star" ratings for rollover resistance as part of the agency's New Car Assessment Program (NCAP). The highest rating is five stars; the lowest is one star. The ratings released January 9 are for model year 2001 vehicles.

More than 10,000 people die every year in rollover crashes, according to NHTSA. Over 60 percent of the sport utility vehicle (SUV) occupants killed in 1999 died in crashes when their vehicle rolled over, compared to 23 percent for car occupants.

NHTSA expects motivated manufacturers will respond to consumer demand for safer, more stable vehicles. In 1979 when NCAP

ratings for frontal crashes began, just 33 percent of vehicles achieved a four- or five-star rating. By 1997, 85 percent had received four or five stars.

The Rollover Resistance Rating is an estimate of the risk of rolling over if a person has a single vehicle crash, usually when the vehicle runs off the road and is tripped by a curb, ditch or soft soil. It does not predict the likelihood of that crash. The Rollover

Resistance Rating is based on "static stability factor," a measure of a vehicle's center of gravity and track width to determine how "top-heavy" the vehicle is. The more "top-heavy" the vehicle, the more likely it is to roll over. The lowest-rated vehicles (one star) are at least four times more likely to roll over than the highest-rated vehicles (five stars). Here is the five star rating system:

**Continued on p. 3**

*In a single vehicle crash, a vehicle with a rating of:*

<b>Five Stars –</b>	☆☆☆☆☆	Risk of rollover less than 10%
<b>Four Stars –</b>	☆☆☆☆	Risk of rollover 10% to 19%
<b>Three Stars –</b>	☆☆☆	Risk of rollover 20% to 29%
<b>Two Stars –</b>	☆☆	Risk of rollover 30% to 39%
<b>One Star –</b>	☆	Risk of rollover greater than 40%

## Response from Release of Rollover Resistance Ratings Exceeds Expectations!

**by Mary Versailles,  
Safety Performance Standards**

There aren't Nielsen ratings for news items, but there are plenty of indications that the release of the first Rollover Resistance Ratings on January 9th was a big hit. Even though many of the visitors to NHTSA's web page that day may have been looking for other information, it is probably no coincidence that the total number of visitors that day exceeded the previous high number of visitors for any

single week! The video news release (VNR) made available on Rollover Resistance Ratings was shown in 659 broadcasts on 293 stations, with an estimated audience of almost 40 million. In addition to stations using the prepared VNR, then Administrator Dr. Sue Bailey went to the Good Morning America, CNN and the Today Show studios the morning of January 9th. That afternoon she was interviewed by all the evening network shows — Peter Jennings World News Tonight (ABC), Dan Rather (CBS) and Tom Brokaw (NBC).

Dr. Bailey also was interviewed by Hearst, Fox, Cox, Washington Post, Detroit Free Press and the Bureau of National Affairs. Rae Tyson, director of public affairs, did radio interviews — AP and some local stations. By all available measures, NHTSA's Rollover Resistance Ratings are a big hit with the public.

Headlines from national newspapers the following morning, January 10, 2001, read:

"SUVs Land at the Bottom of First Rollover Ratings" — *The Washington Post*

"U.S. Issues Vehicle Ratings on Tendency to Roll Over" — *The New York Times*

**Continued on p. 3**

# NHTSA Celebrates Martin Luther King, Jr.



**January 11, 2001.** In honor of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday, NHTSA employees gathered for a celebration that began with the USCG Honor Guard and introductory remarks by Sam Daniel, Engineer in Vehicle Dynamics Division and EEO Counselor.

Following an invocation by Nathaniel Hayes, Office of Technology and Information Management, NHTSA's Director of the Office of Civil Rights introduced Deputy Administrator Rosalyn Millman. In her remarks, Millman said, "Dr. King's life reflected a willingness to cross the cultural lines that divide us, thereby accomplishing feats that would lift us all up. Dr. King's vision was so great, his moral purpose so strong, he made us believe that we



**Several members of the NHTSA staff attended the MLK festivities.**



**Julia Nixon & Company wowed the crowd.**

could be better than we are. And we can be."

Dr. Barbara Reynolds, President and CEO of Reynold's News Service, and author of several books, was keynote speaker.

The program planning committee worked many hours to organize the tribute to Dr. King.

Committee members included Phyllis Alston, Chairperson, Rita Ashley, Gloria Beale, Barbara Coleman, Cathy Cummings, Anetris DeLilly, Dana Douglas, Tina Frazier, Marelena Glaze, Carmen Hayes, Earleen Hughes and Hazel Maddox. ■

## Combined Efforts Expand Distribution of Consumer Information

by **Darlene Curtin,**  
Safety Performance Standards

To educate consumers about vehicle safety issues, the Office of Planning and Consumer Programs and the Office of Defects Investigation (ODI) are working together to get combined information out to the public in the most effective manner. Because both offices have designed state-of-the-art exhibits and are invited to participate at various trade shows throughout the year, staff collaborates to distribute vehicle-safety publications as well as hot line and recall materials simultaneously. By working together, both internally and externally, all can benefit through a cooperative approach to resolve potential safety problems, assist consumers with their vehicle safety concerns, and promote safer highways.

Materials are being improved and new projects launched to distribute vehicle safety

information to our customers—operators of all motor vehicles and motor vehicle equipment. Recently, the two offices shared exhibit space at the D.C. Auto Show held at the Washington Convention Center, and the Transportation Research Board Conference (TRB) held at the Marriot Wardman Hotel. The Auto Show attracted over 70,000 visitors, while the TRB Conference drew a world-wide audience interested in vehicle transportation programs and provided an opportunity for information sharing and interaction. The Office of Planning and Consumer Programs will be exhibiting at the NADA Convention in February, and will distribute a variety of publications on crash tests results, vehicle safety features, child passenger safety, and antilock brakes, while the ODI will be exhibiting at the American Bus Association Conference in late January and the Mid-America Truck Show in late March. Staff will



**Darlene Curtin, Safety Performance Standards and Larry Long, Office of Defects, address Smithsonian personnel on vehicle safety and safety defect notification at the Paul E. Garber Restoration Facility in Suitland, Maryland.**

interact with thousands of customers at these conferences and continue to distribute NHTSA's vehicle safety publications in a combined effort. ■

# The Ad Council and NHTSA Unveil New Public Service Announcements for an African-American Audience to Encourage Seat Belt Use

**January 19, 2001.** Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for African Americans through the age of 14, and are the second leading cause of death between the ages of 15 and 24, surpassed only by homicides.

In an effort to combat the frightening statistics, NHTSA and the Ad Council called upon volunteer ad agency Leo Burnett, USA, to create ads for an African American audience.

Integrating the African American effort with the general market PSAs for the Safety Belt Education Campaign, the new spots target the largest group of non-seat belt users — part-time users who do not use safety belts on short trips, on familiar routes and when driving at low speeds. The PSAs are made relevant to the African American audience using cues that reflect an understanding of the culture to get the audience to see themselves in the advertising.

“Little Thing,” the 30-second TV PSA, utilizes the song “Ain’t No Stoppin’ Us Now,” and a collection of photos from such prominent African-Americans as Rosa Parks, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Mohammed Ali, and Colin Powell, as well as images from the Montgomery Bus Strikes and the Million Man March, to highlight the progress African-Americans have made in recent history. The viewer then hears the sound of screeching brakes and a crash, leaving the message “Car crashes are the second leading cause of death among young African-Americans. Buckle Up.”

The Safety Belt Education campaign formerly employed the popular icons “Vince and Larry, — The Crash Test Dummies” — to spread the message about the importance of buckling up, but changed the creative strategy in 1998 to combat part-time seat belt use. ■

## Response from Release of Rollover Resistance Ratings Exceeds Expectations!

Continued from p. 1

“SUVs Score Poor Grades in Government’s Rollover Rating System”  
– *The Wall Street Journal*

“Rollover Ratings Draw Criticism, Consumers” – *USA Today*

“U.S. Releases Vehicle Rollover Ratings”  
– *Los Angeles Times*

“Report: SUVs Most Susceptible to Rollover Crash” – *The Denver Post*

“Ford Vows To Upgrade SUV Safety”  
– *The Detroit News* ■



**THE ADVERTISING COUNCIL, INC.**

**SAFETY BELT EDUCATION**



---

“A LITTLE THING” :30 CNTD-0253

			
(MUSIC THROUGHOUT) SINGER: There's been so many things	that held us down...	But now it looks like things	are finally comin' around.
			
No stoppin'...	No stoppin'...	No stoppin'...	No stoppin'...
			
No stoppin'...	No stoppin'...	No stoppin'...	No stoppin'...
			
No stoppin'...	(QUICK CUT REPRISE) (SFX: SCREECH OF BRAKES)	(SFX: CRASH)	(SFX: CLICK OF SAFETY BELT)

Volunteer Advertising Agency: Leo Burnett, USA

1200

## NHTSA Announces First Rollover Resistance Ratings

Continued from p. 1

Among the first vehicles rated, only one, the Honda Accord, received five stars. All of the other passenger cars rated to date received four stars. In addition, the Chrysler PT Cruiser, Honda Odyssey, Chevrolet Silverado Extended Cab 4x2, and the GMC Sierra Extended Cab 4x2 received a four star rating. One vehicle, the Ford Focus, has Electronic Stability Control, a device which does not affect the Rollover Resistance Rating directly

but may reduce the likelihood of a single vehicle crash, and thus, the risk of subsequent rollover. NHTSA will note vehicles equipped with Electronic Stability Control in all future Rollover Resistance Ratings announcements.

The agency expects to issue rollover resistance ratings for more than 80 Model Year 2001 vehicles by April of 2001. Ratings will be posted on the NHTSA web site [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov) as they become available. ■



## Recent People Saving People/Teamwork Leadership Challenge Awards

David Coleman, NSA  
Barbara Gray, NSA  
Luke Loy, NSA  
John Lewis, NSA  
Richard Merritt, NSA

In recognition for assisting with the large volume of vehicles being imported from Canada. They stopped their normal assignments to assist in the review of conformity statements. As a result of the team effort, the backlog was reduced.

Valencia Johnson, NSA

For her exemplary work, and her quick and professional manner in handling a crisis call from a consumer who called in distress. Ms. Johnson took the initiative to research the appropriate Firestone information and went beyond the call of duty in explaining all issues.

Tina Foley, OPACA  
Kathryn Henry, OPACA  
Martin Koubek, NPP

For coordinating all NHTSA activities for the Secretary's ITS conference.

Michelle Chawlk, NPP  
Arlene Whittington, NPP

For their extraordinary customer service efforts demonstrated during the Firestone defects investigation.

Louise Davis, NPP

For her hard work in putting packages together for approval by the Chief Counsel. She helped the project stay on track.

### Certificate of Appreciation

Sarah Hunt, NTS

For invaluable assistance in developing the *Getting to School Safely Community Action Kit* and verifying the accuracy of the contents and resources prior to publication.

Johanna C. Lowrie, NPS

In recognition of superior achievement in bringing New Car Assessment Program test reports to consumers in compact disc format.

John Donaldson, NCC

For dealing with significant legal issues on a

tight deadline in order for the Driver Distraction Demonstration to occur. His efforts helped VRTC/NHTSA disseminate an important safety message to millions of *Dateline* viewers nationwide.

Cheryl Neverman, NTS  
Barbara Sauers, NTS

For taking on an unexpected assignment as Acting Division Chief with no advance notice. During that time two major Secretarial events (the BRP press event and the Congress of National Black Churches MOU signing) occurred. They both jumped to the task at hand to ensure that the division continued to operate smoothly and that the work was of high quality and completed in a timely manner.

Garrick Forckenbrock, NRD

In recognition for developing a substantial amount of new mechanical hardware on a tight deadline in order for the Driver Distraction Demonstration to occur.

Elizabeth Mazzae, NRD

In recognition for developing the Human Use Review Panel document for this demonstration and performing all the detailed planning for the Driver Distraction Demonstration.

Anders Longthorne, NRD  
Tonja Lindsey, NRD

For providing assistance to the Office of Defects Investigations and various other NHTSA offices in support of the ongoing Firestone Tire Investigation.

Susie Weiser, NRD

In recognition for handling multiple tasks for a meeting hosted by VRTC to discuss issues pertaining to the FMVSS 208 final rule issued last spring.

Anita Fennell, NRD

For assisting in the preparation of the FARS Annual System-wide Training Conference that was held in Las Vegas, NV.

William Fan, NPS

In recognition for serving as Acting Division Chief for an extended period of time during the

absence of the supervisor.

Joan Tetrault, NSC

In recognition for demonstrating NHTSA's State and Community Services web site at a press event at which Administrator Bailey and Secretary Slater were the stars.

Wendi Wilson-John, NSC

For coordinating a very successful CFC campaign from start to finish.

Peggy Barker, NSC

For providing assistance and guidance in the development of the secretarial support module of the employee orientation course.

Sharon Spann, NSC  
Myra Wootson, Region IV

Elaine Scott, Region VI  
Sharon Blackman, Region VI  
Joyce Chapman, Region X  
Judy Craig, Region VII

For providing great and outstanding input in the development of the secretarial support module of the employee orientation course.

Gary Butler, Region IV

For his extraordinary efforts in planning and organizing the Region IV Youth Conference.

Bill Kootsikis, Region IV  
Terrance Parker, Region IV

For assisting on the planning team for the Region IV Youth Conference.

Ken Quintana, Region IV

In recognition for coordinating the conference contractor in accounting for registration fees during the planning and conduct of the Region IV Youth Conference.

Robert Pollack, Region V

For doing an excellent job in coordinating and implementing a conference that attracted over 140 people with presenters from throughout the United States.

Mark Chin, NAD

In recognition for the excellent computer support provided at the National Transportation Safety Board's News Conference on December 7.

NHTSA Now is an official publication of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Office of Public and Consumer Affairs.

Kathryn Henry  
Editor

**Contributors:** Darlene Curtin, NPS; Mary Versailles, NPS; Prentis Kie, NAD; Earleen Hughes, NOA.

If you would like to submit articles or photographs, please address them to NHTSA/OPACA, attention Kathryn Henry, NOA-42, 400 7th Street, SW, Room 5232, Washington DC 20590. (202) 366-9550. FAX: (202) 366-5962. Internet address: khenry@nhtsa.dot.gov

### QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Remember your dreams."

— Maryanne Radmacher Hershey