

NHTSA 19-05
Friday, August 19, 2005

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NHTSA Proposes New Roof Crush Standard

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) today proposed improvements to its current roof crush standard.

The proposed new standard would also extend roof strength requirements to all vehicles weighing up to 10,000 pounds. The current standard only applies to vehicles up to 6,000 pounds. Improved roof strength is one aspect of a comprehensive NHTSA plan to reduce deaths and injuries among belted occupants in rollover crashes.

NHTSA also is seeking comment on other aspects of its rollover protection strategy, including the possible use of improved safety belt technology to better hold a belted occupant in place during a rollover crash.

"It will take a comprehensive strategy to reduce the staggering number of rollover deaths on the nation's highways", said NHTSA Administrator Jeffrey Runge, M.D. "Improving roof strength is an integral part of that plan".

The agency estimates that, among belted occupants, about 807 serious injuries and 596 fatalities annually are caused by contact with a collapsed roof during a rollover crash. About 10,000 people die annually in rollover crashes; approximately 60 percent are unbelted.

NHTSA estimates the new roof crush standard will annually prevent between 13 and 44 deaths and 500-800 injuries when fully implemented. The estimated cost per vehicle would be \$11.81. The total average cost per year would be \$88-\$95 million.

The proposed new standard would require that a roof withstand an applied force equal to 2.5 times the vehicle weight while maintaining sufficient headroom for an average sized adult male. The current requirement is that the roof be able to withstand an applied force equal to 1.5 times the vehicle weight, with a limit of 5,000 pounds for cars.

NHTSA will receive comments on the proposal for 90 days. The full proposal can be seen at: <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/cars/rules/rulings/RoofCrushNotice/216NPRM-to-FR.html>