

# NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: September 24, 1981

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Forwarded to:

Mr. Vincent L. Tofany  
President  
National Safety Council  
444 N. Michigan Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois 60611

} SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

H-81-66 and -67

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The National Transportation Safety Board has concluded a special study <sup>1/</sup> which examined fatalities and injuries as a result of persons riding in the cargo areas of pickup trucks. <sup>2/</sup> The study was made to demonstrate the need for model guidelines prohibiting passengers from riding in the open cargo area of a vehicle, and to make available information about the dangers to passengers riding in the cargo area of a vehicle.

An average of 242 persons were killed each year from 1975 through 1979 in accidents while riding in the cargo areas of pickup trucks, according to data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) Fatal Accident Reporting System (FARS). In addition, an average of 167 persons suffered incapacitating injuries and 142 persons received nonincapacitating injuries each year.

In 1979, the Safety Board investigated an accident involving a compact pickup truck in which the driver and three persons were riding in the cab and eight persons were in the open cargo area of the truck. The driver failed to negotiate a curve and the truck ran off the road and overturned. Seven persons in the cargo area were killed. <sup>3/</sup> As a result of its investigation of this accident, the Safety Board determined that model guidelines might assist States in formulating legislation which would control the use of cargo areas of vehicles for passenger conveyance. Accordingly, the Safety Board recommended on September 6, 1979, that the National Committee on Uniform Traffic Laws and Ordinances (NCUTLO):

<sup>1/</sup> For more detailed information, read Special Study--"Fatalities and Injuries Associated with Riding in Cargo Areas of Pickup Trucks" (NTSB-HSS-81-2).

<sup>2/</sup> Includes all pickup trucks, with or without caps, campers, stake, and small dump bodies.

<sup>3/</sup> Highway Accident Report--"Ford Courier Pickup Truck, Fixed Object Collision, Patuxent Road, Near Crofton, Maryland, April 23, 1979" (NTSB-HAR-79-6).

Establish model guidelines for prohibiting passengers from riding in open-cargo areas of vehicles that are not being used for work-related purposes. (H-79-40)

Since the Safety Board's recommendation was made after the NCUTLO's last full meeting in August 1979, it could not be acted on. The NCUTLO subcommittee on traffic operations was to meet in February 1981 and determine whether the recommendation would be put on the agenda for the NCUTLO's next full meeting in August 1981. These meetings were never held because of budget constraints. The subcommittee may meet in the fall of 1981 and again consider placing the recommendation on the agenda in preparation for a full meeting in August 1982.

Fatal accident data from the Fatal Accident Reporting System files of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reveal that almost 70 percent of the victims of this type of accident are age 22 or younger. The four accident case studies cited in the Safety Board's special study involved drivers and passengers who were 19 or younger. Young people often gather in groups for transportation to social or sporting events or on pleasure trips. A pickup truck can accommodate and transport a larger number of persons at one time than an automobile when the cargo area is used. In the accidents cited, the average number of persons in the rear cargo areas was eight.

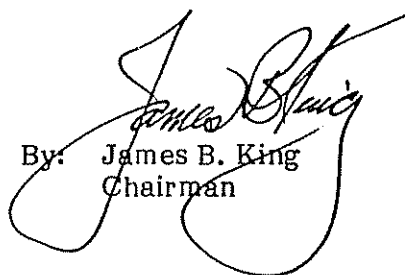
Because of its ability to reach large segments of the public, the National Safety Council could be effective in informing the public of the hazards of riding in the open cargo areas of vehicles. For example, since many teenagers and young adults are involved in these types of accidents, they should be made aware of these hazards early in their driving careers. The National Safety Council could disseminate this information to high school driver education instructors for inclusion in driver education programs.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the National Safety Council:

Disseminate information to the public concerning the hazards of riding in the open cargo area of a vehicle. (Class II, Priority Action) (H-81-66)

Disseminate information to high school driver education officials concerning the hazards of riding in the open cargo area of a vehicle. (Class II, Priority Action) (H-81-67)

KING, Chairman, and GOLDMAN and BURSLEY, Members, concurred in these recommendations. DRIVER, Vice Chairman, and McADAMS, Member, did not participate.

  
By: James B. King  
Chairman