

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: September 21, 1979

Forwarded to:

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Executive Director
National Committee on Uniform Traffic
Laws and Ordinances
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SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

H-79-40

About 9:15 p.m. on April 23, 1979, a 1978 Ford Courier pickup truck with 12 teenaged occupants, 8 of whom were riding in the open bed, was traveling at a high rate of speed along a winding country road near Crofton, Maryland. The truck failed to negotiate a curve to the left, ran off the right side of the road, and struck three trees located about 7 feet from the edge of the pavement. Ten passengers were killed and one passenger was seriously injured; the driver was injured slightly.

Impact speed was so great that even if occupants were wearing seat and shoulder belts they would have had little or no predictable chance of surviving the collision. Passengers in the bed or rear of the truck had even less of a chance for surviving any type of high-speed collision, because they had no belts available to use and had little or no protective shell to prevent their ejection or intrusion from outside objects. Data obtained from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) Fatal Accident Reporting System indicated that from 1975 to 1978, an average of about 4,200 persons per year were killed in pickup trucks.^{1/} Of these, about 250 persons per year were riding in the bed of the pickup. After excluding fatal accidents in which only a driver was involved, 34 percent of the passengers riding in the bed were killed while 28 percent of the drivers and passengers in the cab were killed. This accident reinforced those statistics. Those States with more than 25 fatalities in the bed of the pickup over this 4-year period included:

<u>State</u>	<u>Fatalities</u>
Arizona	49
California	31
Florida	63
Michigan	26
New Mexico	37
North Carolina	26
Texas	112

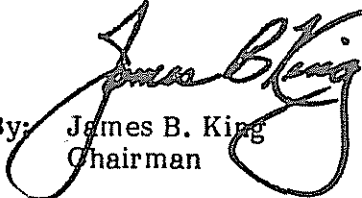
^{1/} Includes all pickup trucks, including those with campers, stake, and small dump bodies.

No State is known to have laws that prohibit riding in the bed of a pickup truck. The National Committee on Uniform Traffic Laws and Ordinances, whose function is to establish uniform traffic laws for the States and local communities, considered but did not adopt a model law that would have prohibited riding in any area of any vehicle where passenger seats and belts were not provided. The law was not adopted primarily because passengers could not occupy a standard seat in some work-related vehicles and the law could not be readily enforced for vans, campers and other enclosed vehicles. However, the Safety Board believes that at least a law should be directed specifically to open-cargo area vehicles being used for nonwork-related purposes.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the National Committee on Uniform Traffic Laws and Ordinances:

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

KING, Chairman, DRIVER, Vice Chairman, McADAMS, GOLDMAN, and BURSLEY, Members, concurred in the above recommendation.

By: 
James B. King
Chairman