



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594
Safety Recommendation

Date: April 10, 1991

In reply refer to: H-91-13

To the Governors and Legislative Leaders
of Alabama, Delaware, Kentucky, Maine,
Massachusetts, Nebraska, New Hampshire,
North Dakota, Rhode Island, South Dakota,
Vermont, and West Virginia

On March 1, 1988, the National Transportation Safety Board published a report on its study of the performance of lap/shoulder belt systems in 167 motor vehicle crashes investigated by the Safety Board.¹ Although the Safety Board found several areas in which seatbelt systems could be improved, it also found that lap/shoulder belts clearly offer occupants of motor vehicles substantial protection in a wide variety of crashes. Data reported by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) are consistent with the findings of the Safety Board study. The NHTSA estimates that 19,361 lives were saved between 1984 and 1989 by the use of safety belts; of that number, 14,191 were estimated to have been saved as a result of mandatory use laws (MULs).

The Safety Board agrees that MULs are an effective way by which to increase the use of lap/shoulder belt systems; the Board stated in its 1988 study report that it supports the passage of MULs. When the study was issued in 1988, 31 States and the District of Columbia had already enacted MULs, and Federal legislative proposals were being considered to encourage the other States to enact such laws. Because it appeared that the remaining States would quickly enact MULs, the Safety Board directed its efforts to the development of other means to increase the proper use of seatbelt systems and of ways to improve the efficacy of seatbelt systems. For example, in 1988, as a result of its safety study, the Safety Board issued four recommendations to the NHTSA: (a) H-88-7, directed at reducing the incidence of belt system misuse, asked NHTSA to revise its publications on child passenger protection; (b) H-88-8 asked NHTSA to revise its testing procedure for window-shade lap/shoulder belts because of their tendency to permit too much slack; (c) H-88-9 asked NHTSA to limit the angle of inclination allowable in reclining seats; and (d) H-88-10 addressed adjustable upper

¹ The study did not address the performance of lap-only belt systems. In an earlier safety study, "Performance of Lap Belts in 26 Frontal Crashes" (NTSB/SS-86/03, 1986), the Safety Board concluded that in frontal collisions, persons using lap-only belts may not be adequately protected against injury and may sustain additional (even fatal) injuries, induced by the lap belt itself.

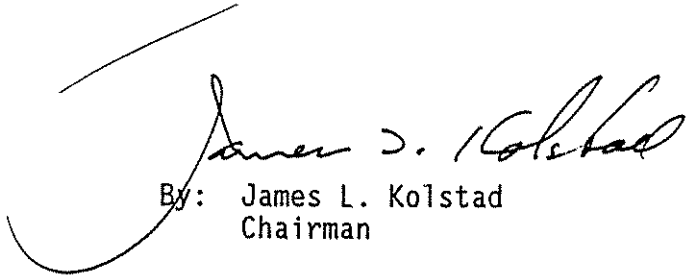
anchorages. More recently, the Safety Board issued Safety Recommendation H-90-111 asking the manufacturers of passenger vehicles to provide adjustable upper anchorages to help reduce the incidence of misuse of the shoulder portion of the lap/shoulder belt system and to promote increased use among small adults and children.

Although data from the NHTSA demonstrate that MULs are one of the most effective means by which to increase the use rate of seatbelt systems, only 7 of the 19 States that did not have MULs have enacted such laws since the Safety Board issued its 1988 safety study report. Data from the 1990 observational survey conducted for the NHTSA in 19 cities indicate that the use rate was 36 percent in 6 cities from States that did not have MULs, while the use rate was 54 percent in 13 cities from States that did have MULs. The Safety Board believes that aggressive public education and enforcement programs will be necessary to achieve the goal of seatbelt use by all occupants of passenger vehicles. However, the Safety Board also believes it is essential that all States enact legislation requiring the use of lap/shoulder belts by occupants of all passenger automobiles, light vans, and trucks at all occupant seating positions equipped with such belt systems.

Therefore, the Safety Board recommends that the governors and legislative leaders of the 12 States without mandatory seatbelt use laws:

Enact legislation that requires occupants of all passenger automobiles, vans, and light trucks to use lap/shoulder belt systems at seating positions equipped with such belt systems.
(Class II, Priority Action) (H-91-13)

Chairman KOLSTAD, Vice Chairman COUGHLIN, and Members LAUBER, BURNETT, and HART concurred in this recommendation.



By: James L. Kolstad
Chairman

Honorable Guy Hunt
Governor of Alabama
State Capitol
Montgomery, Alabama 36130

Honorable Michael N. Castle
Governor of Delaware
Legislative Hall
Dover, Delaware 19901

Honorable Wallace G. Wilkinson
Governor of Kentucky
State Capitol
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601

Honorable John R. McKernan, Jr.
Governor of Maine
State House
Augusta, Maine 04333

Honorable William F. Weld
Governor of Massachusetts
State House
Boston, Massachusetts 02133

Honorable Ben Nelson
Governor of Nebraska
State Capitol
Lincoln, Nebraska 68509

Honorable Judd Gregg
Governor of New Hampshire
State House
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

Honorable George A. Sinner
Governor of North Dakota
State Capitol
Bismark, North Dakota 58505

Honorable Bruce Sundlun
Governor of Rhode Island
State House
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Honorable George S. Mickelson
Governor of South Dakota
State Capitol
Pierre, South Dakota 57501

Honorable Richard A. Snelling
Governor of Vermont
Pavilion Office Building
Montpelier, Vermont 05602

Honorable Gaston Caperton
Governor of West Virginia
State Capitol
Charleston, West Virginia 25305

Legislative Leaders
Mandatory Belt Use Recommendations Recipients

Honorable Ryan deGraffenried, Jr.
President of the Senate
Alabama Senate
State House
11 South Union
Montgomery, Alabama 36130

Honorable James S. Clark
Speaker of the House
Alabama House of Representatives
State House
11 South Union
Montgomery, Alabama 36130

Lieutenant Governor Dale E. Wolf
President of the Senate
Delaware Senate
Legislative Hall
Dover, Delaware 19901

Honorable Terry R. Spence
Speaker of the House
Delaware House of Representatives
Legislative Hall
Dover, Delaware 19901

Lieutenant Governor Brerton C. Jones
President of the Senate
Kentucky Senate
Room 142
State Capitol
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601

Honorable Donald J. Blandford
Speaker of the House
Kentucky House of Representatives
Legislative Offices Annex
State Capitol
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601

Senator Charles P. Pray
President of the Senate
State House, Station 3
Augusta, Maine 04333

Honorable John L. Martin
Speaker of the House
State House, Station 2
Augusta, Maine 04333

Senator William M. Bulger
President of the Senate
Massachusetts Senate
State House, Room 330
Boston, Massachusetts 01233

Honorable Charles Flaherty
Speaker of the House
Massachusetts House of Representatives
State House, Room 356
Boston, Massachusetts 01233

Senator Dennis Baack
Speaker of the Senate
Room 2101
Capitol Building
Lincoln, Nebraska 68509

Senator Edward C. Dupont, Jr.
President of the Senate
New Hampshire Senate
Room 312
State House
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

Honorable Harold W. Burns
Speaker of the House
New Hampshire House of Representatives
Room 302
State House
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

Lieutenant Governor Lloyd Omdahl
President of the Senate
North Dakota Senate
Senate Chamber
State Capitol
6 East Boulevard Avenue
Bismarck, North Dakota 58505

Lieutenant Governor Roger Begin
President of the Senate
Rhode Island Senate
Room 317, State House
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Lieutenant Governor Walter D. Miller
President of the Senate
South Dakota Senate
State Capitol Building
500 East Capitol
Pierre, South Dakota 57501

Lieutenant Governor Howard Dean
Vermont Senate
State House
115 State Street
Montpelier, Vermont 05602

Senator Keith Burdette
President of the Senate
West Virginia Senate
Room 229-M
State Capitol
Charleston, West Virginia 25305

Honorable Ronald A. Anderson
Speaker of the House
North Dakota House of Representatives
House Chamber
State Capitol
6 East Boulevard Avenue
Bismarck, North Dakota 58505

Honorable Joseph DeAngelis
Speaker of the House
Rhode Island House of Representatives
Room 323, State House
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Honorable Jim Hood
Speaker of the House
South Dakota House of Representatives
Post Office Box 611
Spearfish, South Dakota 57783

Speaker Ralph G. Wright
Vermont House of Representatives
State House
115 State Street
Montpelier, Vermont 05602

Honorable Robert Chambers
Speaker of the House
West Virginia House of Representatives
Room 232-M
State Capitol
Charleston, West Virginia 25305