

Remarks of Jeffrey W. Runge, MD
18th International Technical Conference on the
Enhanced Safety of Vehicles
Nagoya, Japan
May 19, 2003

- *Arigato Gozaimas, Hiramatsu-san.* Thank you for the introduction, and *Ohio Gozaimas; Guten Morgen, Bonjour,* and good morning everyone.
- Hiramatsu-san, Go-sho-kai, Arigato Gozaimas. Wa-ta-shi wa, NHTSA no, Jeffrey-Runge-to mo-shi-mas. Kono dento-teck-ee-nah ESV Kai-gee oh, Ni-hon-de, Kai-sai deki-mashta ko-to, So-shte, Ni-hon-no, Yo-ki, Yu-jin ni, sai-kai-deki-mashta ko-to, Tai-hen oo-reshi-ku, O-mot-te, ee-ma-su.
- As kindly introduced by Hiramatsu-san, I am Jeffrey Runge, Administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. I am honored to attend this historical conference in Japan, and meet with our Japanese friends again.
- Sugiura-san, Nakayama-san, Omichi-san, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen: it is my great pleasure to be here with you at the opening of this important event.
- This is my first opportunity to attend ESV since I became the NHTSA Administrator nearly 2 years ago. I am delighted to welcome all of you to the Conference.
- Let me begin by thanking the Government of Japan for hosting the ESV Conference and by thanking the Japan Nagoya Organizing Committee, in particular Hiramatsu-san, Yoshida-san and Ono-san, and all those who worked so hard to organize this Conference. I sincerely appreciate all of your efforts.
- I extend to you the greetings of President George Bush and U.S. Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta. They stress that safety is the number one priority of the U.S. Department of Transportation.
- The ESV conference provides a framework for safety experts in different nations to work together to meet our vital safety goals.
- What you accomplish collectively in your sessions over the next several days will continue to extend the bounds of human skill through technological advances... to increase safety beyond what each of us could accomplish individually.

- Our goal is to achieve total safety from all possible aspects... by developing and applying technology to pursue improvements in all phases of the crash event.... crash avoidance, crashworthiness, and post-crash research.
- This is about more than the technology of the vehicle, such as smarter vehicles and driver assistance. It is about seeking effective countermeasures for the total safety problem, whether it is human factors or the vehicle's interaction with the environment.
- One of the ways to accomplish this is to develop test procedures to assess the performance of the vehicles in real-world situations. And, of course, new technologies must be affordable and acceptable to customers.
- We also have a duty to ensure that these technologies do not result in unintended safety consequences. As we add technologies designed to make our lives safer, more productive, and more efficient, we must guard against the possibility that these technologies also create new problems, such as distracting drivers from the driving task.
- Our primary responsibility at all times is to enhance the safety of all road users. The global burden of road traffic injury is our collective public health problem. Specifically, I ask the industry to consider its responsibility, not only to the safety of its own customers, but also to the safety of those with whom the customers interact.
- We must therefore consider the vulnerability of all road users ... other vehicle drivers and occupants, cyclists and pedestrians.
- We must also be aware of the special needs of the elderly and children who ride in vehicles, cross the streets, or operate non-motorized vehicles.
- We must be cognizant of the public health burden posed by the products we create, and design and build accordingly. What we do, the consequences of our actions, must ultimately ensure the safety and security of the traveling public.
- At the U.S. Department of Transportation we take this job very seriously. It is manifested in everything we do. Yet many challenges lie ahead.
- Our goal in the U.S. is to reduce the highway fatality rate by one-third, from 1.51 to 1.0 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles traveled, by 2008. This is a very demanding goal to reach.
- Our approach to meeting this goal focuses on several priority areas that will yield the greatest results.

- These priority areas include increasing safety belt use, reducing impaired driving, reducing vehicle incompatibility, and reducing rollover crashes.
- We at NHTSA are looking forward to the participants sharing their research achievements throughout the conference in these priority areas.
- Apart from the tremendous human cost from motor vehicle crashes, the economic burden is enormous, and cannot be ignored.
- In the U.S., the total annual cost is more than \$230 billion, including the cost of injuries and fatalities as well as property damage, congestion, and other costs. On this slide, I have highlighted some of the problems that contribute to the cost.
- The economic costs are not confined to the U.S. The Transportation Research Laboratory in the UK estimates that the global cost just for crash injuries and fatalities is now \$518 billion U.S. dollars each year.
- In fact, the proportion of GNP consumed by road traffic fatalities and injuries increases as nations become more motorized.
- I have high hopes that the work you will do here over the next few days will help us reduce the human cost as well as the economic cost.
- In doing so, we can achieve our collective goal of improving safety for our motoring public, and indeed, for all road users around the world.
- ESV started over 30 years ago with just a small group of safety researchers. It has now grown into a well-recognized body of researchers from around the world. The United States Department of Transportation and NHTSA are proud to be a part of it.
- As a group, ESV participants have grown and matured together. You have accomplished much that makes us all proud. Your hard work has brought vehicle safety to where we are today.
- Before I conclude, I want to acknowledge the work of the many internationally recognized safety leaders from both government and industry who will be retiring after this conference. Thank you for setting a wonderful example and serving as an inspiration to the next generation of safety researchers.
- Thank you for inviting me to be with you at ESV. I wish you success with your conference. And on behalf of NHTSA and the US Department of Transportation, I would also like to thank you in advance for the help you will give us in realizing progress towards our nation's safety goals and priorities.
- *Arigato Gozaimas.*