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FMVSS 214 Upgrade PRESS EVENT**

- Good afternoon and thank you all for coming. I am here today to announce a significant upgrade in crash protection that addresses one of our most pressing safety issues.
- This new safety standard will save hundreds of Americans from death and disability, and will move us closer to President Bush's goal of reducing deaths and injuries on our nation's roadways.
- This is a terrific day for NHTSA and for me as Administrator. It is a milestone that we have been working diligently toward for years. It's not just another government regulation for me, and I'd like to give you my perspective.
- During my 20 years in the emergency department, I took care of many people who were seriously injured in side-impact crashes, many of whom did not make it, or survived with severe, life-changing brain injuries.
- Of all the crash types, these crashes were often the saddest. Quite often, the person struck in the side was doing everything right -- driving sober, wearing a safety belt and going through on a green light -- only to get slammed in the side by a driver who ran a red light or ignored a stop sign.
- I thought many times over that something should be done to protect people who are doing everything right -- yet end up with debilitating injuries or dying.
- Thanks to President Bush and Secretary Mineta, I have the privilege today of announcing that we intend to do just that -- to offer a significant protection for people whose lives would otherwise end or be changed, literally in the blink of an eye.
- Today, we are issuing a proposal to upgrade our side-impact crash protection standard. In effect, we want to help protect those who are doing everything right.
- This proposal -- an upgrade of the so-called "Standard 214" -- has the potential to save lives, far in excess of anything other regulation our agency has put forth during my tenure.
- We estimate that this new standard will save between 700 and 1,000 lives when fully implemented.

- Fatalities resulting from side-impact crashes are a serious safety problem on America's roadways.

[Point to chart #1, Passenger Vehicle Occupant Fatalities]

- Please note that 23% of all fatal crashes involve a side-impact. That's about 7,500 deaths a year -- and 6 out of 10 involve a brain injury.
- Because of these numbers, we set out to protect the brain with the new standard. Thus, the most significant difference between the old standard and the new one is a requirement for enhanced head protection in side-impact crashes.
- The rule will spur automakers to use a comprehensive set of technologies to increase head protection for vehicle occupants, of all sizes who are struck from the side at any angle.
- While all side impact crashes are serious, the problem is exacerbated if the passenger car is struck by a pick up or SUV, as you can see from this graphic.
- In fact, if driving a passenger car you are 3 ½ times more likely to be killed if hit by a pick up truck or SUV than if hit on the side by another passenger car, as you can see.

[Point to chart #2, Driver Fatality Ratios.]

- We expect this problem to grow, as about half of all new vehicles sold today are in the light truck category – which includes SUVs and pickups.
- These larger vehicles are different from passenger cars in that they ride higher and generally weigh more.
- The data illustrate just how serious this is. As you can see in the third chart, if you are hit in the side by a truck, your risk of death is much higher.

[Point to chart #3, Fatal Side Impact Crashes.]

- Similarly, the risk of death is significant when striking into an object such as a tree or pole.
- Therefore, the proposed rule is designed to reduce fatalities not only from collisions with higher riding vehicles, but also with rigid objects, such as trees or utility poles.

- To satisfy this additional objective and to increase side impact safety, we will introduce a more rigorous pole test to complement the existing moving deformable barrier test, which will remain the same.
- The new pole test more accurately reflects real world crashes where, for example, a vehicle may veer off the road and strike a narrow object.
- The car to my right – a 2004 Honda Accord – was subjected to this test at our Ohio research center. I invite you to take a close look at it.
- There's also a reason why we have 2 guests seated in the chairs next to the Accord. We're changing the crash dummies used in both the pole and moving deformable barrier tests.
- For the first time in any government standard worldwide, we're introducing a small female adult dummy, representing a 4 foot 11 inch woman.
- In this way, we are advancing the development of head protection systems for smaller adults.
- We're also upgrading to a new, advanced mid-size male dummy with a much-improved design to measure head impact.
- Although the new standards will require automakers to make changes, NHTSA doesn't mandate that manufacturers use any specific technology to meet performance standards.
- Still, we expect that automakers will meet this tougher standard through greater use of various types of innovative head protection systems, such as inflatable side curtain air bags.
- It is fortuitous that voluntary industry initiatives are already underway to ensure that effective and safe side air bags will be in an increasing number of vehicles in the coming years.
- We expect that the industry's near-term voluntary initiatives and NHTSA's longer term regulatory solutions will be complementary in improving side-impact safety.
- Our goal is to make this proposed rule a final rule by next year.
- Finally, I want to present the NHTSA team that is responsible for this rule.
- In addition to Associate Administrator for Rulemaking Steve Kratzke, I want to introduce 3 dedicated individuals who were instrumental in the development of this proposal:
 - Randa Samaha, from our research department;

- Dee Fujita of our chief counsel's office; and
 - Lori Summers of Rulemaking.
- Together they will help me answer your questions.
- Thank you for coming.