



Improving Commercial Motor Vehicle Crashworthiness Standards

The Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance (CVSA) supports enhancements to commercial motor vehicle crashworthiness standards.

From 2001-2010, according to *the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's Motorcoach Safety Action Plan—2012 Update*, crashes involving a motorcoach resulted in an average of 17 motorcoach occupant fatalities. In 2011, there were eight serious motorcoach crashes, resulting in 28 occupant fatalities.¹ Meanwhile, data released by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) indicates that in 2011, fatalities increased among large truck occupants by 20 percent over 2010 numbers.² While reducing the number of crashes that occur on our nation's roadways should be a top priority for all within the commercial motor vehicle (CMV) community, work can also be done to help reduce the impact of crashes that do occur.

With this in mind, in 2012, Congress included a number of crashworthiness standards requirements and studies in the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act, MAP-21. The bill requires regulations on a number of motorcoach crashworthiness standards, including safety belts, roof strength and anti-ejection measures. In addition, the bill directs the U.S. Department of Transportation to study and report back on crashworthiness standards for property-carrying CMVs over 26,000 pounds, motorcoach fire prevention and mitigation, and motorcoach interior impact protection, among others. These regulatory requirements and research will help improve CMV safety by mitigating the impacts of crashes when they do occur. ***For that reason, CVSA strongly supports giving these reports and regulations that address crashworthiness standards high priority.***

In addition, there are other crashworthiness standards that should be considered. For example, in 2011, the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) petitioned NHTSA to develop stricter standards for rear impact guards and rear end protection, also referred to as underride guards, on trailers pulled by heavy trucks. IIHS found that the current standards are inadequate, arguing that vehicles have changed 'dramatically' since those standards were put into place. IIHS reiterated this recommendation in March of 2013, when it released updated crash results. According to IIHS, while the rear impact guards are made to prevent a vehicle from running under the trailer in a crash, research indicates that the guards are less effective in crashes where contact takes place at the edges of the trailers.³ ***CVSA supports requiring NHTSA to develop updated standards for rear impact guards and rear end protection.*** Also, CVSA recognizes that the most effective rear impact guard is one that is never used. Accordingly, FMCSA, NHTSA and others should devote resources to enforcement and education programs that help prevent rear-end collisions.

¹*Motorcoach Safety Action Plan – 2012 Update*, FMCSA-ADO-13-001. Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration. December 2012.
<http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/documents/safety-security/Motorcoach-Safety-Action-Plan-2012.pdf>

²*New NHTSA Analysis Shows 2011 Traffic Fatalities Declined by Nearly Two Percent*. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. December 10, 2012.
<http://www.nhtsa.gov/About+NHTSA/Press+Releases/2012/New+NHTSA+Analysis+Shows+2011+Traffic+Fatalities+Declined+by+Nearly+Two+Percent>

³*Status Report – Vol. 48. No. 2*. Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. March 14, 2013.
<http://www.iihs.org/externaldata/srdata/docs/sr4802.pdf>

CVSA is an international not-for-profit organization comprising local, state, provincial, territorial, and federal motor carrier safety officials and industry representatives from the United States, Canada, and Mexico. Its mission is to promote commercial motor vehicle safety and security by providing leadership to enforcement, industry and policy makers. The Alliance actively monitors, evaluates, and identifies solutions to potentially unsafe transportation processes and procedures related to driver and vehicle safety requirements most often associated with commercial motor vehicle crashes. In addition, CVSA has several hundred associate members who are committed to helping the Alliance achieve its goals; uniformity, compatibility and reciprocity of commercial vehicle inspections, and enforcement activities throughout North America by individuals dedicated to highway safety and security. For more on CVSA, visit www.cvsa.org.

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