



U.S. Department
of Transportation

**National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration**

400 Seventh St., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

Mr. Harold A. Schaitberger
President
International Association of Fire Fighters
1750 New York Avenue, NW Third Floor
Washington, DC 20006

FEB 18 2004

Dear Mr. Schaitberger:

Recently, there has been increased media attention about the potential dangers of extrication-related deployments of automotive safety equipment (i.e., airbags, seat belt pretensioners, etc.) to emergency personnel during rescue and EMS operations. While there have been reports of injuries to rescuers, the prevalence of these types of incidents is not known.

For several years, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Special Crash Investigation Program (SCI) - has investigated reports of injuries from safety devices, including malfunctions and/or inadvertent activations of air bags during rescue operations. In the few reported cases of deployments occurring during rescue operations, it was found that the vehicle electrical system was either not properly deactivated or the responders had inadvertently damaged the vehicle air bag control module.

NHTSA's Crash Investigation Program and Emergency Medical Services Division will continue to monitor and analyze the problem. However, in order to determine the extent and nature of any hazard, and design appropriate countermeasures, it is crucial that NHTSA receive information on as many of these incidents as possible. Emergency services providers are reminded to report all unintentional deployments of automotive safety equipment, whether or not the rescuer is injured, by one of the following methods:

1. By phone, (202) 366-2545 or (877) 201-3172
2. By e-mail, SCI@nhtsa.dot.gov
3. By facsimile, (202) 366-5374, Attention: SCI Program
4. By mail:

U.S. DOT - NHTSA
Special Crash Investigation Program (NPO-122)
Attn: Thomas Roston
400 Seventh St., SW
Room 6213
Washington, DC 20590



The safety of emergency services personnel is of paramount importance to NHTSA. The agency will carefully review all reported hazards involving vehicle safety equipment and, in concert with its national partners, take action to ensure emergency responders' safety.

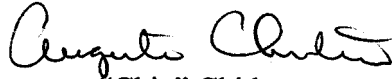
You are encouraged to share this reporting mechanism with all emergency services and law enforcement agencies.

For additional information, please contact Thomas Roston, Special Crash Investigator, at (202) 366-5395, or by e-mail at Thomas.Roston@nhtsa.dot.gov. You may also contact David Bryson, Highway Safety Specialist, at (202) 366-4302, or by e-mail at Dave.Bryson@nhtsa.dot.gov.

Sincerely,



Drew Dawson
Chief, NHTSA EMS Division



Augustus "Chip" Chidester
Chief, Crash Investigation Program