

Slater Inaugurates New Agency

U.S. Transportation Secretary Rodney E. Slater recently inaugurated the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, the newest agency of U.S. DOT. Each year, crashes involving large trucks kill more than 5,300 people and injure about 130,000. Slater charged the agency with providing the leadership, direction, and action necessary to continue improving motor carrier safety and to guide the nation to a 50 percent reduction in truck- and bus-related fatalities by 2010.

In its efforts to achieve U.S. DOT's long-range goals, FMCSA is planning to make improvements to the commercial driver's license program. These improvements will result in identifying problem drivers; getting high-risk drivers off the road; ensuring the safety fitness of newly formed motor carrier companies; levying strong sanctions on foreign carriers that operate illegally in the United States; denying entry to carriers that are not properly registered; and imposing stiff penalties on violators, including fines and shutdowns. Funding under the Motor Carrier Safety Improvement Act will provide resources to help states conduct more vehicle, driver, and carrier inspections. Also to be funded are a major study of crash causes and a new system for collecting crash data.

For more information contact Dave Longo, U.S. DOT (telephone 202-366-0456), or visit the FMCSA website (www.mcs.dot.gov).

Minnesota Tests Advanced Crash Notification System

An operational test of Mayday Plus, a crash notification system designed to enable more rapid and better-informed emergency response to vehicle crashes, is under way in Minnesota. The field tests, which began in November 1999, will be used to evaluate the system's capabilities and benefits. The system was installed in 120 vehicles and will notify the Minnesota State Patrol and Mayo Clinic emergency dispatch centers if a crash occurs.

Mayday Plus is an extension of in-vehicle equipment developed during the Automated Collision Notification (ACN) field tests in New York. Sponsored by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the ACN project developed crash severity reporting capabilities. Building on the foundation developed by ACN, Mayday Plus automatically notifies authorities in the event of a crash. The differences between the two are that Mayday Plus sends more data, establishes communication between the authorities and passengers, and intelligently routes emergency data to responders on the basis of the

vehicle's location and the type of emergency. When a crash occurs, an in-vehicle device relays information on the vehicle's location, direction of impact, change in velocity during the crash, and final resting position. After transmitting the data, the system opens a direct voice connection between an emergency dispatch center and the passengers.

Because Mayday Plus sends immediate notification and provides the crash location, emergency assistance can be dispatched without delay. By saving time, the system saves lives. Response time is an especially critical concern in crashes that occur in rural areas. In Minnesota 30 percent of miles traveled are on rural roads, yet 70 percent of fatal crashes occur on these roads.

For more information contact Douglas Funke, Veridian Engineering, Inc. (telephone 716-631-6938), or visit the Veridian website (www.veridian.com).

Integrated System Manages Vegetation

In an effort to reduce maintenance requirements and costs, increase species biodiversity, and decrease herbicide use, the Ontario Ministry of Transportation has evaluated an integrated system for recording roadside weed location and related features. Using the Global Positioning System to locate vegetation sites and a geographic information system to store, manage, manipulate, and display data, the Ministry recorded and mapped weed areas, areas of desirable vegetation, water features, culverts, and adjacent land uses. The Ministry found that, with refinements, the integrated system has the potential to serve as a valuable tool in the planning, administration, and quality control of maintenance contracts; in the linking of vegetation features and resources to the development, design, and construction processes; and ultimately in the automation of herbicide applications.

Summarized from an article in Road Talk, November 1999. For more information contact Steven Struger (telephone 905-704-2147) or Laura Kingston (telephone 905-704-2331), Ontario Ministry of Transportation.

Crash Dummies Made More Human

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has released the final design and performance specifications for the new 6-year-old child crash dummy. The advanced 6-year-old child dummy is the first addition to the Hybrid III crash dummy family since the Hybrid III male dummy was adopted in June 1986.