



U.S. Department  
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National Highway  
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Administration

# SAFETY NOW

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## NHTSA Announces New Policy for Air Bags

**November 18, 1997.** The Department of Transportation held a heavily attended news conference at 10:00 to announce a new policy on air bags. Consumers fitting certain risk profiles will be able to purchase an on-off switch to temporarily deactivate the device. In addition to making air bag on-off switches available under limited circumstances, it was announced that a national public-private educational campaign is being launched to help consumers make informed decisions concerning switches.

"This is the practical solution that allows you to turn off the air bag for someone at risk and turn it back on to preserve the lifesaving benefits for everyone else," said Transportation Secretary Rodney E. Slater.

Secretary Slater cautioned, however, that few people will need the new air bag on-off switches. Air bags provide life-saving benefits for the vast majority of people, who can virtually eliminate any risk from deployments by following basic safety rules:

- Buckle your seat belt.
- Never place a rear-facing infant seat in front of an air bag.
- Keep approximately 10 inches between your breastbone and the air bag.
- Place children in the back seat and make sure they are properly restrained, either in a seat belt or a child safety seat appropriate for their size and weight.

Under the new rule developed by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, auto dealers and service outlets can begin installing on-off switches on Jan. 19, 1998.

To obtain a switch, consumers must follow a simple four-step process. First, they must obtain a NHTSA information brochure and a request form, both of which will be available from the agency and at vehicle dealerships, repair shops, state motor vehicle offices, and other locations.



**NHTSA Administrator Ricardo Martinez, M.D. answers questions posed by reporters at the announcement of the agency's decision on air bag deactivation.**

Second, they must fill out the request form and send it to NHTSA. Vehicle owners must certify on the form that they have read the information brochure and that they fit one of four profiles of people at risk.

Third, NHTSA will send an authorization letter to the vehicle owner.

Finally, the vehicle owner would take the

letter to a dealership or other service outlet to have an on-off switch installed.

The four eligibility profiles are:

- Those who cannot avoid placing rear-facing infant seats in the front passenger seat.

**Continued on p. 3**

# NHTSA Technical Information Services (TIS) Wins Hammer Award

by Jeanette Chow,  
Technical Information Services

The Secretary's 30th Annual Awards ceremony on November 19 was an especially momentous occasion for the NHTSA Technical Information Services (TIS) team. The TIS staff was honored with Vice President Al Gore's Hammer Award for physically and procedurally transforming its office to improve customer service. (See the 10/13/97 issue of NHTSA NOW. The office provides the public with important safety related information on motor vehicles and motor vehicle equipment.)

"This was a recognition of our series of steps taken to reduce the backlog, make the TIS reading rooms easier for the public to use, as well as providing public access terminals in the docket reading room," said TIS staff member David Doernberg, who also is the NHTSA Historian. "All of these efforts make it easier to do business with TIS and empower customers to do their own searches and save both time and money," he said. "I think that TIS winning the Hammer Award is a well-deserved honor."

The TIS team was recognized for modernizing its in-house system used by staff members to retrieve data within minutes or hours compared to the old system which required days to perform the same tasks.

Another TIS staff member, Theresa Gordon, said, "I am grateful and thankful that we as a team were able to accomplish the 'impossible' which was clearing the backlog." She credits this to the team's hard work and efforts as well as the motivation instilled by TIS team leaders.



Both David Doernberg and TIS Acting Team Leader Kevin Ball proudly received the award for their office from Secretary Slater at the ceremony, held at the Andrew Mellon Auditorium at 14th and Constitution Avenue. The award consists of a gold frame with a black velvet background containing a \$6.00 hammer. The hammer is tied with a red, white and blue ribbon and is accompanied with a note from Vice President Al Gore saying "Thanks for building a government that works better and costs less!"

The Hammer Award is a special recognition given to teams of federal employees, not individuals, who have made significant contributions in support of the President's National Performance Review principles: putting customers first, cutting red tape, empowering employees and getting back to basics.

TIS's management expressed their appreciation of the staff and their accomplishment. "I'm proud of everyone and all their hard work that led us to get the Hammer Award," Acting Team Leader Kevin Ball said.

Joe Cassell, Director of the Office of Information Resource Management (OIRM), said, "I wish to thank the TIS staff for their hard work, dedication and commitment over the past years in converting the TIS office into the success that it is today. I am proud that they are a part of the OIRM team."

Associate Administrator Herman Simms, who also was very pleased that the team received the award, said, "It was a vision I had early on [for TIS]. I'm glad to see it come to fruition."

In the past, the TIS office (formerly TRD) did not receive much recognition for its hard work, and important, invaluable service to the public. Many of the TIS members felt that the Hammer Award recognition was "long overdue." However, the TIS staff appreciated Secretary Slater's remarks at the ceremony where he said, "Let me say, it is an honor to be among those to whom honor is due."

"On my first day as Secretary," Slater said, "I asked those on the stage — the senior team — to help me find the good of the DOT family, and praise it. We clearly have found the good . . . In the last 10 months, as Secretary of Transportation, I have traveled the world. I have visited more than half the states. I have given more than 200 speeches. I have reached out to every group imaginable — but nothing is more pleasant than today . . . For I owe all of you a very big thank you for making these first 10 months so successful. I would not be able to serve the President and the American people as I do, were it not for all of you. I want you to know, I appreciate that."

The TIS team members, who were given a certificate and a pin in the shape of a hammer, included: Kevin Ball, Frances Bean, Joe Cassell, Jeanette Chow, David Doernberg, Theresa Gordon, Carolyn Green, Robert Hornickle, Kim Jackson, Craig Killgo, Edward Kosek, Michael Robinson, Sharon Scott, and contractors: Nick Peacock, Alecia Randall, Nasir Rangwala and Yeshi Yilma. ■



Dr. Martinez "signs up" for National Drive Safely at Work Week, as Bill Bush and Erika Callaway of NETS (Network of Employers) look on. The display was featured at the American Public Health Association Conference in Indiana.

# Garrett A. Morgan: An Opportunity to Encourage Careers in Transportation

by Kathie Klass,  
OPACA



Secretary Slater has created the *Garrett A. Morgan Technology and Transportation Futures Program* to encourage young adults to consider transportation related careers. According to the Secretary, one in seven jobs will be transportation related as we move into the 21st century. Careers in transportation offer varied opportunities and are among the top paying jobs in the nation.

The original inspiration came from the work of Garrett A. Morgan, an African-American who lived from 1877-1963. As a teenager, Garrett recognized the importance of education and continued studying beyond his formal elementary education. He worked hard, discovered he was very good at fixing things, and eventually started his own business. He was always looking for better ways of doing things, and that creativity led him to become an inventor. As he looked at the world around him, Morgan dreamed of how he could use his skills to make the world a better place.

Garrett belonged to a generation that was part of a revolutionary change in transporta-

tion—the introduction of the automobile into a horse-and-buggy world. The automobile was a wondrous invention, but after he witnessed a collision between an automobile and a horse-drawn carriage, Garrett became concerned about the new dangers it posed. His response was to invent and patent the first three-position traffic signal. His invention saved lives then, and it is still saving lives today.

Paulette Rucker and Ted Pasek, IRM, have been NHTSA's leaders in promoting the Garrett A. Morgan program. Ted created a "Safety City" Kids Web Page, which can be found on NHTSA's Home Page ([www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov)). Paulette is currently working with the program officers to develop a plan to go out to the schools to get kids interested in careers in the transportation field. Secretary Slater recently recognized the team that inspired the Kids Page with a "Recognize the Best" award. Richard Devine, IRM, lived with the Kids Page for months, was full of ideas, and was instrumental in getting the information up and available for presentation. John Woodside worked with Rich on the site and helped on many Kids items as well as other assignments.

Safety City was announced at the Moving Kids Safety Conference. NHTSA's student stars: Christopher Culbreath, Ashley Gilmore, and Molly Hurd introduced Safety City with

virtual reality demonstrations of highlights available on the web site. Safety City has been designed for students, teachers and parents from preschool through college and is packed full of information and activities.

The Garrett A Morgan program presents a great opportunity for NHTSA employees to



serve as mentors for teenagers looking into future careers. The Customer Service Team has taken on the responsibility of creating programs and opportunities to highlight careers in traffic safety. Anyone who has ideas or who would like to be involved in the program development, please contact Kathie Klass in the Office of Public and Consumer Affairs at 366-9550. ■

## NHTSA Announces New Policy for Air Bags

Continued from p. 1

- Those who have a medical condition that places them at specific risk.
- Those who cannot adjust their driver's position to keep back approximately 10 inches from the steering wheel.
- Those who cannot avoid situations — such as a car pool — that require a child 12 or under to ride in the front seat.

To help consumers make informed and appropriate decisions about air bag safety, DOT began a major educational effort in partnership with many organizations, including the Air Bag Safety Campaign, the American Automobile Association, the Centers for Disease Control, the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, auto dealers, state motor vehicle departments, and many other public and private organizations and individual companies.

These partners will help distribute millions of copies of NHTSA's information brochure, include air bag safety information in publications, answer questions from the

public, and conduct other media activities.

The rule addresses the risks from the current generation of air bags in vehicles already on the road and those that will be built during the next few years. Continued changes and emerging technologies will lead to air bags with improved performance that eliminate risks to all vehicle passengers. NHTSA is leading an aggressive research effort with the goal of issuing a proposal on advanced air bags in the first half of 1998.

This action builds upon a comprehensive series of actions that have been taken to preserve the benefits of air bags while reducing their risks:

- In May 1995, NHTSA allowed automakers to install on-off switches for passenger air bags in new cars and light trucks that have no rear seats or rear seats that were too small to properly accommodate a child seat.
- In May 1996, NHTSA launched the Air Bag Safety Campaign, a public-private

coalition involving automakers, insurance companies, suppliers and safety groups aimed at educating people about safe transportation in vehicles with air bags.

- In November 1996, NHTSA required that bold new labels with explicit air bag safety warnings be installed in all new vehicles and on child safety seats. Automakers also agreed to mail copies of the new labels to the owners of air bag-equipped vehicles that already were on the road.
- In December 1996, NHTSA extended for two more years, until Aug. 31, 2000, its policy allowing passenger-side on-off switches in vehicles that cannot accommodate a child seat in the rear seat.
- In March 1997, NHTSA allowed automakers the flexibility to more quickly reduce the power of their air bags by 20 to 35 percent. Automakers have said they will be able to install reduced-power air bags in most 1998-model vehicles that need them.

Consumers who have questions or concerns about air bags should contact the agency's toll-free Auto Safety Hotline at 1-800-424-9393. For up-to-date information on air bag issues, contact NHTSA's site on the World Wide Web at: <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov> and click on the air bag icon. ■



## Recent People Saving People/Leadership Challenge Awards

<p>Henrietta Mosley For her courteous, helpful, and instructive manner in which she carried out her responsibilities in issuing the solicitation and awarding the contract in a very timely manner for the Office of Vehicle Safety Compliance.</p>	<p>NAD</p>	<p>For exceeding the NHTSA standard for responses to written requests for information (e.g. average time for a Privacy Act Request 4.9 business days).</p>	<p>Andrew Stancell For his hard work and negotiation with South Carolina financial personnel. A confrontation was avoided and the need for the Office of Inspector General to intervene was eliminated.</p>	<p>R-IV</p>	
<p>G. Jon Setzer For providing outstanding leadership to local and state agencies responsible for investigating and prosecuting odometer fraud in 14 Western states.</p>	<p>NSA</p>	<p>Han-Sun (Bob) Chan Samuel Daniel, Jr. Carolyn Felder Dorothy Nakama Roberta Mayer In recognition for performing the difficult collateral duties and responsibilities of an equal employment opportunity counselor for a sustained period of time.</p>	<p>NPS NPS NSA NCC NTS</p>	<p>Robert Pollack For his outstanding efforts in arranging and coordinating the very successful Region V Governor's Representative and staff conference.</p>	<p>R-V</p>
<p>Gary Butler For assisting the Tennessee Highway Safety Office in preparing the state's 410 application. Without his dedicated efforts, it is doubtful Tennessee would have qualified for 410 funding in FY-97.</p>	<p>Region IV</p>	<p>Christina Mills For volunteering to develop and update, on a real-time basis, State Highway Safety Law Fact Sheets and State Briefing Summaries.</p>	<p>NTS</p>	<p>Louise Belliveau In recognition of her commitment to excellence and dedication to the NHTSA mission. Her communication to the public and others is outstanding and reflects positive on the agency.</p>	<p>R-I</p>
<p>Curtis Murff James Downey For their outstanding efforts in arranging and coordinating the very successful "Ride Like A Pro" bicycle safety event at the all-star game.</p>	<p>Region V Region V</p>	<p>Joe Ann O'Hara For demonstrating outstanding leadership and professionalism in handling not only the Division's responsibilities, but also managing the programs assigned to the Division to support President Clinton's and Secretary Slater's safety belt initiative.</p>	<p>NTS</p>	<p>Amy Berning For coordinating the development of the recently published "Compendium of Traffic Safety Research Projects, 1987-1997."</p>	<p>NTS</p>
<p>Robert Pollack In recognition for his dedication in conducting an outstanding revised Instructor Facilitator Training Course.</p>	<p>Region V</p>			<p>Paul Tremont For volunteering to draft the Federal Register Notice announcing our 5 year "Strategic Plan for Behavioral Research in Traffic Safety."</p>	<p>NTS</p>

## Strengthening Safe Communities Conference

Thelma Kuska  
For developing and pilot testing a program titled "Walk in Our Shoes" in which nurses, police officers, firemen and EMS members consolidated their energies to do safety belt - safety checks.

### Traffic Safety Programs

Alice M. Washington  
Denise Jackson  
Joyce Jones  
Janice White  
Albert Rockwell  
Cheryl Schuler  
Trenise Dickson

Mark your calendars now and plan to join us in Cleveland, **Saturday, March 28, 1998, 1:00pm - 5:00pm and Sunday, March 29, 8:00am - 11:30am** for our third annual **Safe Communities Pre-Lifesavers** meeting.

- Explore how communities can develop specific ideas for change that result in "bottom line" improvement.
- Learn about new challenges and opportunities from community practitioners for expanding existing partnerships.
- Find out more about ways to use available

data and sampling for program implementation and measuring results.

The format will include round table discussions, facilitated workshops, and resource sessions with plenty of opportunity for discussion and feedback.

For more info about "Safe Communities" visit our web site at [www.nhtsa.dot.gov/safecommunities](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/safecommunities) then highlight Safe Communities Service Center. For a registration form regarding the "Strengthening Safe Communities Conference" fax a request to Meetings Management, Inc. @ (703) 922-7780. ■

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Kathryn Henry  
Editor

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## QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"All glory comes from daring to begin."

— Eugene F. Ware