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NHTSA CIREN – Defending Rigged Rescue Rules

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Dear Care for Crash Victims Community Members:

The Need – In President Obama’s first term, more Americans died of crash injuries (132,250 crash deaths) than died in the Afghanistan, Iraq, Viet Nam and Korean wars combined. (NHTSA HS 811706) Of all people who currently die of crash injuries about 56% are not taken to any facility for emergency medical care. And of the remaining 44% of crash fatalities that are taken to a medical facility for treatment, many receive less than timely, optimal, emergency rescue and medical care. See www.careforcrashvictims.com click on Killed in U.S. Crashes 1978 - 2011

The result is that rescue is too little, too late, for too many of the 100 American crash fatalities each day. Of those 100 American crash deaths on an average day, about 20 die of injuries suffered in rollover crashes. About 14 are not transported to any facility for emergency medical care and 6 die after transport to some facility for care.

Rescue Rules Rigged Against Crash Victims – Near the end of the Bush administration, GM gave the CDC Foundation \$250,000 to be transferred to CDC to work (with NHTSA support) on Triage Guidelines (Rescue Rules for Crash Victims) [1]. Result: “rollover” and “extrication” were removed from triage guidelines that had been previously used for 2 decades to get crash victims timely, optimal, care.

Then in 2012, under the Obama administration, CDC (again with NHTSA support), and relying on a GM and Toyota funded researcher (who also was a CIREN PI from Michigan) reissued the triage guidelines without restoring “rollover” and “extrication” as important indicators of serious injury probability to help rescue workers do their best at saving lives. Thus CDC and NHTSA acted twice to impede, rather than expedite, emergency care for crash victims with a high probability of a serious injury. See CDC Reports in Ref. [1, 2].

CIREN Now – Evidence of Capture and Control

This month the NHTSA CIREN program conducted a public meeting on with a presentation on the “Benefits of Advanced Automatic Crash Notification (AACN)”. I was hopeful that a subject that I have worked on since 1992 to improve care for crash victims with information from the crash would show significant

progress. Disclosure, I also attended in part because while at NHTSA I had a role in creating the CIREN program in the mid 1990s. [3, 4, 5]

Let us now consider the conduct of this “open” public meeting of NHTSA's CIREN program at NHTSA HQ in Washington, DC.

The September 4, 2013 NHTSA CIREN meeting agenda showed opening remarks by "Matt Craig, PhD, Division Chief, Human Injury Research Division" (former employee of GM) who currently directs the NHTSA CIREN Program. On the current NHTSA organization chart, Dr. Craig reports to Stephen Ridella (who also formerly worked for GM) and under Obama was promoted and currently heads the NHTSA Office of Vehicle Crashworthiness Research.

The CIREN presentations given are Power Point based and cover medical, engineering, and statistical data. Historically, CIREN meetings were highly interactive to gain the benefits of multi-disciplinary audience participation. So I was shocked after I asked a few questions when the NHTSA meeting manager stood up and said there would be a new ground rule – “Hold all questions until after the presentations were completed.”

After the first presentation I asked: When would the presentations be made public on the NHTSA web site? NHTSA Answer: Hopefully in about 4 weeks, but then the presentations have to go through a 508 (Disability) compliance process so no one knows when they will be available to the public.

I then asked since it was being televised if the Agency was going to post it online? Answer: No, it was not being recorded by NHTSA.

Who was able to watch it? Answer: The agency has limited bandwidth webcasting capability so only 25 remote viewers was possible. Who signed up to view it remotely? No answer.

Open NHTSA questions:

Did auto companies sign up? Did auto companies or others record the meeting that NHTSA did not record?

Why did the NHTSA web site fail to inform the public in advance that only 25 organizations outside of Washington could sign up to watch the presentations? Who was informed? How were they informed? Who took advantage of this remote access provided by the NHTSA CIREN program? No NHTSA answers given yet. NHTSA knows - the public does not.

Before we the people believe these NHTSA CIREN excuses and evasions, consider that other parts of NHTSA, notably Offices not managed directly by former GM workers, record and make available to the public agency webinars routinely. See

<http://www.regulations.gov/#!searchResults;rpp=25;po=0;s=NHTSA-2012-0084;fp=true;ns=true>

The Important Mission of CIREN: Reducing Human Tragedies – Stymied

CIREN’s mission is described as follows:

“The CIREN process combines prospective data collection with professional multidisciplinary analysis of medical and engineering evidence to determine injury causation in every crash investigation conducted.

The mission of the CIREN is to improve the prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation of motor vehicle crash injuries to reduce deaths, disabilities, and human and economic costs.” See <http://www.nhtsa.gov/CIREN>

The presentation Benefits of Advanced Automatic Crash Notification (AACN) was made by Dr. Eileen Bulger, Chief Surgeon from the U. of Washington. Her presentation was good in some respects, disappointing in other respects:

- * Good examples of crashes with delayed discovery and serious consequences,
- * Good description of need for AACN,
- * Interesting analyses of importance of minimizing time from crash to treatment.

Dr. Bulger’s presentation gave me some hope of progress in using ACN - URGENCY – and ADAMS mapping tools to save lives and livelihoods. But I found it disappointing in important respects. Most importantly her presentation failed to make the case for restoration of “Rollover” and “Extrication” to the Triage Guidelines.

At the end of her presentation she offered her personal opinion that every car should enable a crash victim to call 911. I agree, but in serious crashes many people are not able to communicate their needs very well. We can do better if we use the power of ACN + URGENCY algorithms + Automatic communication of informative Alerts to closest Trauma Centers, Fire/Rescue, and Air Medical Service providers for crashes with a "high" probability of a serious injury being present. [5]

At the end of her presentation she mentioned that her team was in touch with automakers and discussing the automatic transfer of data to improve rescue. But noted that auto companies are not yet willing to do so.

At the break, I heard a well-dressed man say: Motorists may want more data transmitted for better rescue but motorists often drink, drive recklessly, speed and don’t buckle up. If they want the data “Make them pay for it.”

I thought: Pay? How much, to whom, for what?

This comment that I heard illustrates the need for a major paradigm shift from auto industry centric to humanity centric governance of CIREN.

As I write this, the Washington Post carried an article that illustrates this point of the auto industry's moral blind spot. The American people saved the auto industry as it faced financial bankruptcy. Now we have to save the industry from moral bankruptcy.

The auto industry, with sales soaring, is currently supporting the position: "Consumers should decide how they want to spend their safety dollars," said Gloria Bergquist, vice president of the Auto Alliance, a lobbying group. "Let the marketplace decide." [6]

When will the auto industry learn that Pay or Die is not a morally acceptable policy?

How Will The NHTSA CIREN Program Be Run in President Obama's 2nd Term?

In 1925 Gandhi identified Seven Deadly Sins or Blunders of the World -- four are particularly relevant to proper governance of the NHTSA CIREN program:

- Commerce without Morality
- Science without Humanity
- Knowledge without Character
- Politics without Principle

CIREN conducts multi disciplinary studies of physical crash forces, injuries, medical treatments, and outcomes. CIREN was designed to answer important questions of life or death, and/or disability.

Physics studies physical forces. Newton and Einstein helped humankind understand the hidden forces of gravity. Physicists now study string theory to understand hidden dark forces of matter and energy influencing our universe.

Political Science studies who gets what, when, where, why, and how. Americans are increasingly recognizing hidden political forces that often rig the rules against us in many ways that affect our lives and livelihoods – a political string theory in the making. Americans need now to apply their understanding of physics and political science to improve policies and practices of care for crash victims. [7]

For now it is up to NHTSA Administrator David Strickland to decide whether or not to reassign management of CIREN to managers with less appearance of conflicts of interest. In the future it will be up to 'we the people' to judge whether or not public or private interests are being served by NHTSA.

NHTSA can and must cut the strings rigging rescue rules against the public. NHTSA and CDC can and must restore the two critical words “Rollover” and “Extrication” to the Federal rescue guidelines - that were removed with GM money.

Too many tragedies are occurring daily in crashes involving rollover and/or extrication resulting in needless deaths, and serious injuries.

Will the number of Americans dying of crash injuries in President Obama’s 2nd term exceed the 132,250 Americans who died in his 1st term? And will the number seriously injured in crashes exceed another 500,000 Americans?

[1] See <http://www.cdc.gov/news/2007/06/crashresponse.html> and

<http://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/7528/> and

<http://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/7524>

[2] See <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/rr/rr6101.pdf>

[3] At www.careforcrashvictims.com see CIREN Tab NHTSA CIREN Report #2, Lehman Chapter, and see more at URGENCY Tab see 2005 ESV Paper on URGENCY.

[4] See <http://www.nhtsa.gov/CIREN> Disclosure: I had a role in drafting the NHTSA mission statement in the mid 1990s based on my previous work with Dr. Ayub K. Ommaya. See my comments at <http://pakteahouse.net/2008/09/14/native-son-neurosurgeon-dr-ayub-ommaya/> and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ayub_K._Ommaya

[5] See paper at <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/pdf/esv/esv19/05-0191-W.pdf>

[6] Please see article and comments at

http://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/safety-groups-pushing-for-implementation-of-2008-rearview-camera-law/2013/09/24/bbdd8592-2562-11e3-ad0d-b7c8d2a594b9_story.html

[7] See <http://billmoyers.com/episode/full-show-inequality-for-all/> This month, a new movie is being released “Inequality for All” that addresses the corruption of lobbyists rigging the rules against the people.