

Lombardo

CREATING DEMAND FOR CRASH TESTING

➤ From Sweden, Germany, Japan and Korea, to Australia and the USA, there are excellent safety engineers and scientists the world over in both the private and public sectors. But, as safety legend Ralph Nader has pointed out, these people have more problems than they deserve, and more solutions than are deployed.

The basic problem is that safety engineers in auto companies and suppliers have to convince their managements to fund safety RDTE&D (research, development, testing, evaluation, and deployment). Managements are reluctant to allocate capital unless they can see a return on investment, have to meet legal (governmental and/or liability) requirements, or face competitive imperatives (pressures or opportunities). Information, as published in magazines such as this, can increase the motivation of managements to allocate resources for crash testing – especially when there is public demand for safety.

Demand for safety can be stimulated. How? By people, organizations, and events, both planned and unplanned. For unplanned events think GM and Nader. Think Lee Iacocca's marketing initiative of using images of a dramatic head-on crash of two airbag-equipped Chrysler cars in which motorists walked away, saved by airbags. Think Toyota and the Saylor crash. Think Governor Corzine's crash and the air medical transport to a Level 1 Trauma Center within the Golden Hour that saved his life.

First, start with very important goals. Volvo has one: "Currently, 1.2 million individuals die in traffic accidents annually. Volvo has a vision of no serious injuries or deaths in or by a Volvo car by the year 2020."

Secondly, we must create lead measures of progress toward meeting these goals. This can be done by publishing annual Corporate Total Average Fatality Rates (per 100,000 registered vehicles), and by publishing annual Make Model Injury Insurance Loss Measures (per 1,000 insured vehicle years). Any model that achieves 'substantially better than average' in all three categories gets Safety Recognition.

Corporate fatalities by time from crash to trauma center should also be published annually. With automatic crash notification, we can reduce the number and percentage of people dying of crash injuries without transport to any medical facility for treatment – currently more than 50% in the USA.

The third measure is to create a safety-stimulating scoreboard that shows how corporate auto makers rank at protecting their customers and other motorists; how well insurers stimulate safety; and how well Federal and State governments improve the performance of preventing and treating needless deaths and treating people injured in crashes. Can we do this? Yes we can!

Think consumer groups such as Consumers Union and the The Center for Auto Safety/*The Car Book*. Think insurance

groups such as IIHS and Advocates for Highway & Auto Safety. Think auto companies such as Volvo and Mercedes-Benz. Think academic researchers in universities, and medical, injury research, and engineering centers. Think Federal government agencies in the USA, including NHTSA, NTSB, and CDC. Think NCAP programs. Think departments of transportation. Think auto clubs. Think foundations. Think media that want and need to become more relevant and important to their audience. Crash testing is exciting, relevant, and of life-or-death importance. All have access to crash fatality data and the resources and incentives to perform and publish such analyses.

In terms of public support, all motorists prefer more crash testing in laboratories to the millions of crash tests occurring in the real world each year, resulting in unnecessary injuries and deaths.

With talk of the importance of science, technology, engineering, and math, and the need for jobs, more extensive crash testing is needed to save lives and livelihoods. ◀

When Louis V. Lombardo joined NHTSA in 1978, he became an advocate for adopting airbags and other crashworthy measures, and played a key role in the airbag's adoption. He has since spent time at the IIHS, more time at NHTSA, and is now campaigning for better emergency response to car crashes. After 40 years of dedicated work, Lombardo continues to have constructive dialog with his auto-safety colleagues and government officials, and he insists there's much more to be done. Lou's website is www.careforcrashvictims.com

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