

# Airbags

Present and Future



# Air-bags

- ◆ GM was first to mass-produce air-bags in 1974 (Oldsmobiles and Cadillacs)
- ◆ Basic components are similar in all vehicles
- ◆ Sensing devices/sensors could be anywhere
- ◆ 8-14 mph impact needed
- ◆ +/- 30 degrees from frontal impact

# Air-bags

- ◆ Since 1987, at least 60 million vehicles have factory equipped airbags
- ◆ 90% of 1997 cars have airbags
- ◆ Driver deaths reduced 14%
- ◆ Passenger deaths reduced 11%
- ◆ There is a 33% increase in deaths in children from passenger side bags

# Air bags misunderstood

WASHINGTON — Americans don't recognize the danger air bags pose for children because they don't understand how the devices work, researchers said Thursday.

People have a mental picture of a sort of big, fluffy pillow expanding in front of them, say researchers from the Air Bag Safety Campaign.

Even people with air-bag-equipped cars fail to understand the

force and speed of the bags.

"People must understand that to do its job, an air bag comes out of the dashboard as fast as 200 miles per hour — with a tremendous force that can hurt those who are sitting too close to it, especially children," said Janet Dewey, the group's executive director.

— *The Associated Press*

scary experience of air bags' deploying without being triggered by a crash.

General Motors recently recalled nearly 1 million autos to repair such sensitive air bag systems. The federal highway safety agency is investigating another 1.6 million Chrysler, Mazda, Subaru and Mitsubishi vehicles based on complaints that the devices are inflating inadvertently, according to a review of agency records by The Associated Press.

Three-quarters of those autos are Chrysler minivans and cars. Chrysler engineers are examining the deployments, which they say are rare.

**ISSUE**

"We haven't concluded anything yet," said Chrysler

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has repeatedly said that children up to age 12 should ride in the back seat, but the parents' group say the public is not getting the word and want the warning labels and letters.

"The parents coalition is pleased to hear that the automakers are taking these steps," said Robert Sanders, a coalition founder.

"I'm absolutely thrilled," said Albert Ambrose, whose 5-year-old daughter was wearing her lap and shoulder belt when she was killed by an air bag in a low-speed accident in September.

Twenty-eight children and infants have died of injuries caused by rapidly deploying passenger-side air bags, according to NHTSA. The exact wording of the letters will be determined by

The NHTSA has already proposed new label language and placement and will have the final say on the labels. The agency said it would issue a final rule on air bag warning labels before the end of the year.

"We're committed to working with the agency to resolve this and get labels out there as soon as possible," Felrice said.

Felrice said in Canada the air bags would be depowered by about 20 percent to 30 percent. Air bags now deploy with a speed up to 200 m.p.h. Eighteen drivers also have been killed by air bags in the past six years in low-speed accidents they otherwise should have survived, government accident data shows.

All but three have been smaller women.

# DRIVERS

## Qualified owners can have cars fitted with device starting today

1-19-98

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The majority of people seeking permission for an on-off switch for an auto air bag are drivers who say they sit too close to the steering wheel hub, where the air bag deploys, according to government records.

Starting today, auto owners can go to dealers and independent mechanics to have the switches installed.

General Motors Corp. and Ford Motor Co. are offering the switches — which are retrofitted for autos — which are retrofitted for autos through their

switches. Some applied for them applications are b

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Of those appro es, 57 percent switches, 19 per ger-side switche want both driv switches, accor administration's

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The governme

# Air-bag tips

- ◆ Look for larger, rectangular steering wheel hubs
- ◆ Always have the battery disconnected
- ◆ Sodium Azide is toxic, but when it burns it turns into harmless nitrogen
- ◆ Powdery residue after deflation is only corn starch, talcum powder or baking soda



CRUISE  
ON/OFF

SET



SRS  
AIRBAG

ACCEL  
RESUME

CANCEL

COAST

# **WARNING**

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To avoid serious injury or death:

- Occupants, especially children, should never lean their heads near the window area, where the airbag inflates.
- Always sit upright, properly use seatbelts and use appropriate child restraint systems.
- Do not use accessory seat covers if the airbags are inside the seat.

See the owner's manual for further instructions and warnings.