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# TTI report stresses seatbelt need

Some gruesome facts have come to light for owners of compact cars who drive without seatbelts. Drs. R. L. Ivey and R. B. Goss of the Texas Transportation Institute here developed a method for predicting the probability of injury in six autos including three compacts and three large autos. It employs empirical and statistical evidence. The report states that highway planners have problems if they are to continue reducing the number of

auto deaths and injuries if the number of small cars keep increasing. "THE ANALYSIS applied only to longitudinal barriers like bridge rails, median barriers and guardrails," Ivey said. "However, it is considered valid in other situations, such as collisions with other vehicles and collisions with crash cushions. It should be applicable to any situation where the acceleration on

the passenger compartment can be predicted. "Planners must act on the basis of the data we have now," he said. "We cannot wait for the statistical and verification of modifying factors if the immediate needs of the planning process are to be met. "The relatively small passenger space of the small vehicle shortens the distance between passengers and surfaces which can cause injuries," Ivey pointed out. "From

this perspective we would assume that small vehicles offer less favorable passenger environments. Additionally, we would expect smaller vehicles to be less safe from the standpoint of objects piercing the cockpit because of the more fragile nature of their structure. "EXTENSIVE TESTING of the vehicle has shown that some subcompacts with their higher center of gravity are less stable and more apt to roll in emergency conditions than

full-sized autos," he continued. "Maneuverability is a small car advantage but this quickness of steering may lead to spinouts in which automobiles may roll," Ivey added. TTI conducted a series of guardrail, bridge rail and median barrier collisions. To simplify computation, researchers set composite dimensions and weights for a subcompact representing the Gremlin, the Vega and the Pinto. In addition, composite values were determined for a standard size V-8, four-door sedan representing the Chevrolet Impala, the Ford Galaxie and the Plymouth Fury.

In the test they hit the rails at angles from 5 to 20 degrees at speeds from 40 to 80 mph. The barriers were rigid, semi-rigid and flexible.

These figures show that even if vehicle compartments were equally protective of their passengers, it would be more hazardous to hit longitudinal barriers in a subcompact than in a standard size vehicle.

WHILE TESTS SHOWED critical injuries can occur at almost any acceleration, the chances of serious injury were twice as great in a subcompact. Also at any speed at any angle of collision the chances of injury of some sort were twice as great.

"The actual vulnerability of small cars is not fully appreciated," Ivey said. "It is surprising when the probability of injury of small vehicle occupants in barrier collisions exceeds that of standard occupants by two to one. Action will be required so that our death and injury rates will not soar in response to the influx of subcompact vehicles."

"SEAT BELT USE LAWS are the most promising counter measure to this trend," he said. "Tests show that the use of seat belts would decrease the probability of injury in barrier collisions by over 50 percent."

"The results obtained from the analytical exercises are not unexpected," Ivey noted. "Reasonable individuals who consider the problem at any length will probably conclude that it is less sage to run into any obstacle in one of 'those little cars' than it is in a good old Chevy, Ford, Plymouth, or Rolls."

## Eclipse to occur Friday

A pair of celestial events occur this week, for persons who will go to a bit of effort to see them.

A partial eclipse of the sun and major meteor shower will take place Friday and Saturday.

The sun will be partially obscured by the moon starting at 8:05 a.m. Friday. Members of the Central Texas Astronomical Society also call attention to a major meteor shower expected to produce large numbers of "falling stars" early Saturday.

Seen over most of the U. S. and Central America, the eclipse will blot out about 30 per cent of the sun here. The moon will take its biggest "bite" out of the solar disk at 9:05 a.m. The show ends at 10:20 a.m. Farther north, the fourth eclipse of the year will cover up to 70 per cent of the sun.

CTAS members, including TAMU students and area amateur astronomers, say there will be no noticeable change in daylight illumination to the naked eye.

Several ways of viewing the eclipse are available. It can be projected through a binocular tube onto white paper, reflected off a small mirror onto a shaded wall, cast by pinhole onto a wall or observed directly, with care, through sandwiched pieces of intensely exposed photographic film.

Observers should be careful not to look directly at the sun through cameras or optical equipment.

One of 10 big meteor showers seen annually, the Geminid shower will produce the most meteors between midnight and start of morning twilight Saturday. They will be visible in fewer numbers in the night sky a day before and after Dec. 14.

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