

# Funds given to TAMU for auto-skid studies

To help save lives and keep the nation's highways safe, the Federal Highway Administration has awarded \$155,463 to TAMU. The money will be spent on road surface and skid studies. TAMU will also provide technical advisory services to the federal agency. The work will be done at the Field Test and Evaluation Center for Central and Southern States operated by TAMU's Texas Transportation Institute (TTI).

A major concern is a situation in which rock aggregate and cement become polished from tire wear allowing asphalt to seep up. The result of this condition is an extremely slick surface in the rain.

To avoid this, highway departments across the U.S. are using a standard testing device to monitor the condition of road surfaces. Most states own and operate at least one of these units.

To insure uniform calibration of the units TTI formed the pilot

field test and evaluation center at the TAMU Research Annex in 1971 in conjunction with the Federal Highway Administration.

"The center focuses attention on the development of a facility where the states can obtain technical advisory services, static and dynamic calibrations, and standardized services for their skid measurement equipment," said J. W. Button, the center's director of operations.

"It provides services for 17 states in the southern and central U.S.," he said. "Each state brings its skid measurement system here and we calibrate it."

"We have five test surfaces on which we run the equipment at 20, 40, and 60 miles per hour while water is sprayed in front of the test tire," Button said. "The tire is then locked, forcing a skid, and computerized measurements are made of the condition of the pavement surface. Then we correlate the difference

between the test unit and our calibrated unit.

"After all static calibrations, modifications and measurements were completed, the second dynamic correlation was conducted," he said. "The results are presented in the form of a linear equation for each test speed."

"Not only are the test systems adjusted to conform to specifications but the operators are informed of simple techniques that may be used at their home base to maintain good results," Button said.

Human factors tests were also conducted on the test vehicle operators. The tests produced several improvements, such as keeping the speed indicator in the line of sight of the driver, better seating for body support and adequate engines and water tanks. Testers developed a system to hold speeds constant during tests.

Total funding for the project now exceeds \$778,000.

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