

Metal scrapes, causes sparks

Plastic gas tanks safe, save fuel

United Press International
DETROIT — United States automakers are looking at pliable plastic fuel tanks as a way of reducing the danger of fires and explosions in rear-end collisions.

Automotive engineers say tests have shown tanks made of sturdy, moldable plastic can hold up better than metal in hazardous situations. Because they weigh less, they offer a potential fuel saving bonus.

However, U.S. car makers are concerned that plastic gasoline containers may not be popular with the public or with federal safety officials.

The Chrysler Corp. and Ford Motor Co. have equipped some light-duty trucks, vans and recreational vehicles with plastic fuel tanks. After the 1974 Arab oil embargo, Ford offered a small, plastic auxiliary tank on some full-size and luxury cars.

Few buyers picked up the option. Ford scrapped plans to put a molded, polyethylene tank in its 1979 Mustang.

"We didn't have the guts to take the risk," Chairman Henry Ford II told an interviewer recently.

"In every way we thought it was much better," Ford said. "But we didn't have the courage to put it on our product because we didn't know what the liabilities would be and what the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration would say about it."

Present NHTSA standards, which apply to all cars, trucks and buses under 10,000 pounds, say fuel tanks may not spill more than an ounce of gasoline per minute when rolled over after a rear-end impact of 30 mph.

The standards do not specify what material manufacturers must use for fuel tanks.

"You can use paper mache if you want to, as long as it meets the performance standard," one company spokesman said.

A recent report on high density polyethylene gas tanks by Phillips Chemical Co. said tests conducted in the 1960s indicated "plastic tanks were not only as safe as metal tanks but possibly even safer."

It said both metal and plastic tanks, when engulfed in flames, failed in about two minutes. But the metal ones often exploded, scattering their flaming contents, while the plastic tanks melted down and fueled the fire.


In impact tests, water-filled metal tanks ruptured when dropped from a height of 10 feet while plastic tanks withstood drops of 30 feet, the report said.

One auto company spokesman noted that, unlike metal tanks, plastic ones will not generate sparks in a collision or if scraped along a road surface in an accident.

The Phillips report also noted polyethylene tanks weigh 30 to 50 percent less than template steel, adding to the fuel-saving potential.

Spokesmen for the plastics industry say they have high hopes for plastic fuel tanks and other plastic automotive components as the auto companies continue downsizing cars to meet the 1985 fuel economy standard of 27.5 mpg.

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Lonely bikes to find owners this weekend

By PHYLLIS PONDIA
Battalion Reporter


The Wheelman's Club of A&M University will sponsor an auction of abandoned and unclaimed bicycles Saturday in the Green building at 1:30 p.m.

The bicycles will include 40 speeds, 2 five-speeds, 14 10-speeds, and 14 one-speeds. Brands include Schwinn, Western Flyer and Raleigh.

The auction is held annually to sell unclaimed bicycles the City Police have picked up on campus. Most of these bicycles were picked up in May after the end of the students have left to go to school, said Thomas Parsons, director of security and traffic for University Police. He said only those bikes left unlocked on campus are available.

Every bicycle in the auction has been advertised in the Battalion by the University Police to try and find its original owner. Nobody responds to the advertisement in seven months, the bike becomes eligible for public sale.

If the bicycle was registered with the University Police, the seller must send out registered letters to the last owner and wait six months for a reply to the letters. If there is no reply, the bicycle is advertised and becomes property of the university if no owner claims it.



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Young says Iran similar to civil rights movement

United Press International
WACO — United Nations ambassador Andrew Young believes there is a similarity between conditions in America during the 1960s and the current situation in Iran.

Young, in Waco for a civil rights convention, said Wednesday the people of Iran are organizing around a religious forum just as the blacks in America did when most of the civil rights movement leaders came from the South.

"Blacks in America essentially those locked out of the political process began to go to their churches to search for leadership as a political organization and to ensure religious institutions and the community became the moral and organizing force for a political process," Young said.

On another matter, Young said the relationship between the United States and Mexico was good. He said some differences in the political and economic development aid so far would not find it economically beneficial to cross the U.S. border in order to find work.



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