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TTI may start check on modifications in cars for disabled

By Deborah A. Haring
Reporter

The Texas Transportation Institute, headquartered at Texas A&M, soon may be responsible for quality control inspections of vehicle modifications for the disabled, says Dr. Rodger J. Koppa, head of the institute's human factors division.

In July, the first comprehensive standard for modifications of automobiles and other vehicles for the disabled was adopted by the Texas Rehabilitation Commission, Koppa says.

"Everybody is disabled," he says. "Everybody has some sort of disability. We want to take the handicap out of that disability."

Often this is done by giving the disabled person a method to drive a car and, as a result, be more independent.

This may require an elaborate set of hand controls, wheelchair lifts, automatic doors and windows, raised roofs or lowered floors, Koppa says.

The rehabilitation commission pays the cost of most adaptations, which ranges from several hundred dollars for a set of hand controls to more than \$10,000 or \$15,000 for a complete conversion, he says.

Several other states are considering adopting a standard, he says.

Koppa, also an associate professor of industrial engineering at Texas A&M, helped in the development of the standard for the transportation institute and rehabilitation commission.

But, Koppa says, "A standard is only good as long as you can get people to follow it, so quality control work is needed."

The transportation institute has now proposed to take responsibility for follow-up inspections of the use of this new standard by vehicle manufacturers and modifiers, he says.

The commission, which pays for most of the modification done to vehicles seen on campus and throughout the state, will decide whether to accept the institute's proposal within several weeks, Koppa says.

If the proposal is accepted, technicians and engineers will go to those businesses that rebuild vehicles for severely disabled people and inspect the vehicles. These inspections will help those businesses that need more skills and guidance and will find those that are not following modification standards, he says.

One vehicle modifier would be inspected each week and each inspection would take about one day, Koppa says.

The commission's goal with development of a standard and modification of vehicles is to get disabled people back to work. Rehabilitation engineering, the name for this modification work, has a similar goal — taking the handicap out of the disability, Koppa says.

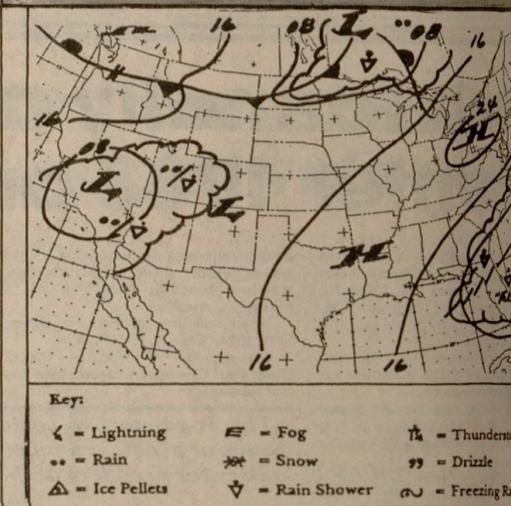
About six businesses in Texas are large-scale modifiers and 10 or 15 others are smaller operations. These smaller modifiers may be one-man garages and each generally modifies one or two vehicles a year, Koppa says.

Many types of adaptation allow people with many types of handicaps to be able to drive, Koppa says.

Vehicles most often are modified for quadriplegics. People with spinal cord injuries form another large group that uses adapted vehicles because some arm movement is generally needed to be able to operate a modified vehicle, he says.

People affected by multiple sclerosis or cerebral palsy, burn victims and stroke victims are others who also have vehicles adapted to enable them to gain some independence, Koppa says.

Weather Watch



Sunset Today: 6:56 p.m.

Sunrise Wednesday: 7:26 a.m.

Map Discussion: An elongated strip of high pressure from southern New England to Texas will dominate much of the country with fair to cool to mild weather. The low over California is a remnant from hurricane Ramon and will produce shower activity into the central Rocky Mountains. The southeastern states will have mostly cloudy to mild conditions with some showers, while hurricane Floyd moves northeastward out of the picture.

Forecast: Today: Fair and mild with a high temperature of 83 degrees and northeasterly winds at 7 to 10 mph.

Tonight: Fair and cool with winds east at 3 to 8 mph and a low temperature of 54 degrees.

Wednesday: Continued fair and mild with a high temperature of 85 degrees and southeasterly winds at 8 to 14 mph.

Weather Fact: Dew point: the temperature to which a parcel of air must be cooled at a constant pressure and constant moisture content in order for saturation (100 percent relative humidity) to occur.

Prepared by: Charlie Brien
Staff Meteorologist
A&M Department of Meteorology

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Engineering researchers from A&M to hold turbomachinery symposium

By Leslie Guy
Reporter

Mechanical engineering researchers at Texas A&M, working in conjunction with NASA to build a space shuttle engine, will hold a turbomachinery symposium in Dallas Oct. 26-29 for users and manufacturers of industrial turbomachinery to discuss design problems, said Dr. Dara Childs, A&M's turbomachinery laboratory director.

The symposium, started 17 years ago, is designed to educate engineers in the petrochemical community who work with turbines, pumps and compressors, he said.

More than 1,000 people from the United States and foreign countries involved in the manufacture of oil and petrochemical products attended the symposium in Corpus Christi last year, he said, and the entire turbomachinery lab staff will attend this year's symposium. The proceeds from the event will be used to support education and research in turbomachinery at A&M, he said.

"What makes it unique is that engineers from companies like Shell

and Exxon will have an organized session," Childs said. "They don't see themselves as competitors on that level, but as allies against the manufacturers."

Since Childs came to A&M, his project has involved the development of the main space shuttle engine for NASA, which provides financial support for the program.

The part of the engine Childs is

"The long-haul development goal of the department is to have a strong internationally and nationally recognized department."

— Dr. Dara Childs, A&M's turbomachinery laboratory director

developing isn't the part that exploded on the space shuttle Challenger, he said.

"This one burns liquid hydrogen and supplies the thrust after the boosters drop off," he said.

The symposium is organized by users for users in industry, he said. Its advisory committee consists pri-

marily of manufacturers, but two educators also are on it — Childs and Dr. Alan B. Palazzolo, an assistant professor of engineering at A&M.

A one-day introductory course precedes the symposium that includes tutorials, lectures and discussions led by industry leaders, Childs said. Also, the symposium will feature over 100 exhibits as a large trade show for people buying and

selling machinery.

To satisfy the demands for efficiency and performance improvements, A&M's turbomachinery program has grown to include about 10 faculty members, 30 graduate students, three or four undergraduates and seven staff members, he said.

In addition to NASA, the supported by government grants and about 15 major industries said. The engines are used in aircraft for the Air Force, the Army, frigates for the Navy and electric power generation for the utility companies, he said.

"The long-haul development of the department is to have an internationally and nationally recognized department," he said.

Rather than working in a laboratory, the lab is made up of a group of professors who conduct various projects. Research in the Engineering Physics Branch and the Research Annex, he said.

Projects involving high water pressure are done at the lab, he said.

Most turbomachinery labs in the industry, he said.

"A&M probably has a better connection with turbo machinery than any other school, but we're behind in the airplane gas turbine field," Childs said.

In addition to NASA, the supported by government grants and about 15 major industries said. The engines are used in aircraft for the Air Force, the Army, frigates for the Navy and electric power generation for the utility companies, he said.

"The long-haul development of the department is to have an internationally and nationally recognized department," he said.

Future FBI director released from Texas hospital

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — FBI Director-designate William S. Sessions, who was released from a hospital Monday after treatment for internal bleeding, said he expects his delayed swearing-in ceremony to come sometime next week.

Sessions, chief federal judge for the western district of Texas, was admitted to Methodist Hospital last Tuesday for treatment of bleeding that stemmed from an ulcer in his small intestine.

The ailment twice delayed his swearing-in as FBI director while doctors ran a battery of tests that determined the bleeding had stopped and

that there was nothing else wrong with him, Dr. Richard Rubio said.

Of the ulcer's flare-up, Sessions, 57, said, "I think this was a one-time occurrence. I feel fine. I'm not ready to arm wrestle yet, but I feel fine."

Rubio has asked Sessions to undergo a low-profile convalescence in San Antonio for a few more days, and the jurist said his swearing-in will come "whenever the pleasure is of the attorney general and the president."

"I expect it will be next week," he said.

Sessions, who for a while was on a liquid diet,

said he can now get back to a normal menu.

"I can eat anything again," Sessions said. "I should avoid an empty stomach, eat regularly and take no aspirin on an empty stomach. And avoid reporters."

Sessions first became sick Sept. 30, one day from Dallas to Washington where he was sworn-in as FBI director the next day. Dr. George Washington Hospital detected a previously undiagnosed small ulcer in the portion of his small intestine.

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