offshore pipelines and Part 192 does not outline differences that are to exist between them.

Technical Pipeline Safety Standards Committee

RSPA presented the NPRM to the TPSSC for its consideration at a meeting in Washington, DC on March 11, 1992. The TPSSC is RSPA's statutory advisory committee for gas pipeline safety. It is composed of 15 members, representing industry, government, and the public, who are technically qualified to evaluate gas pipeline safety. The TPSSC expressed concerns about adopting the proposed changes in 49 CFR Part 192 to address H_2S in natural gas transmission pipelines. The TPSSC 's concerns centered around the need for such a regulation considering the limited number of incidents involving the release of H_2S natural gas into transmission pipelines, and whether it would increase safety, be cost effective and redundant to already existing state regulations. Therefore, the TPSSC recommended that the incidence of H_2S in transmission lines did not warrant a rulemaking.

On the basis of that finding, an analysis and review of the comments to the NPRM, and further analysis of the comments to the ANPRM, RSPA decided to re-consider the need for the proposed regulation and concluded that the proposed H_2S regulations are not warranted because they are oriented/directed toward transmission lines. No injuries or deaths have been attributed to H_2S in natural gas transmission lines. H_2S releases into transmission lines to date have been infrequent, have been of extremely brief duration, and have involved only very minute amounts of H_2S. H_2S that is released into a transmission line remains confined with very little likelihood that there would happen to be a leak in the transmission line at the same time and in the same general vicinity as the release. And lastly, H_2S released into a transmission line from a processing plant would most likely be diluted by natural gas from other sources.

Rather than applying rule changes affecting transmission pipelines, RSPA's regulatory efforts on H_2S should be redirected to gathering lines. The source of H_2S is the gas well, and the gathering line is the first pipeline facility downstream of the well. It is on gathering lines transporting H_2S laden natural gas from wells to processing plants that regulations may be needed. Future development with respect to H_2S in gathering lines may be addressed in a later rulemaking.

On the basis of the foregoing, RSPA hereby withdraws the NPRM proposing to limit H_2S levels in natural gas in gas transmission pipelines.

Authority: 49 U.S.C. 60102 et seq.; 49 CFR 1.53.

Issued in Washington, D.C. on March 4, 1996.

Richard B Felder,

Associate Administrator for Pipeline Safety.

[FR Doc. 96–5374 Filed 3–6–96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910–60–P

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

49 CFR Part 571 and 572

[Docket No. 92–28; Notice 6]

RIN 2127–AG07

Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards; Head Impact Protection

AGENCY: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), DOT.

ACTION: Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking.

SUMMARY: This document grants four petitions to commence rulemaking to amend upper interior head protection requirements to accommodate vehicles equipped with a dynamic head protection device which is activated in a side impact (e.g., a side air bag). This document requests information on various issues NHTSA must evaluate before issuing a notice of proposed rulemaking for these petitions.

DATES: Comments must be received by April 22, 1996.

ADDRESSES: All comments must refer to the docket and notice number set forth above and be submitted (preferably in 10 copies) to the Docket Section, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Room 5109, 400 Seventh Street S.W., Washington, DC 20590.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: The following persons at the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 400 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20590:

For non-legal issues:

Dr. William Fan, Office of Vehicle Safety Standards, NPS–14, telephone (202) 366–4922, facsimile (202) 366–4329, electronic mail ''bfan@nhtsa.dot.gov''.

For legal issues:

Mary Versailles, Office of the Chief Counsel, NCC–20, telephone (202) 366–2992, facsimile (202) 366–3820, electronic mail ''mversailles@nhtsa.dot.gov''.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On August 18, 1995, NHTSA published a final rule amending Standard No. 201, Occupant Protection in Interior Impact, to require passenger cars, trucks, buses and multipurpose passenger vehicles with a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) of less than 10,000 pounds to incorporate measures to prevent or reduce injury when a vehicle occupant's head strikes upper interior components during a crash. The covered components include pillars, side rails, headers, and the roof. The amendments add procedures and performance requirements for a new in-vehicle component test (60 FR 43031). The period for submittal of petitions for reconsideration closed September 19, 1995.

NHTSA received nine petitions for reconsideration of the final rule. Four of those petitions (BMW, Mercedes-Benz, Volkswagen, and Volvo) asked for a variety of changes to the final rule if a vehicle is equipped with a dynamic head protection countermeasure which is activated in a crash (i.e., a side air bag, hereafter referred to as dynamic systems). In addition, four manufacturers (BMW, Ford, Mercedes-Benz, and Volvo) requested meetings with the agency to discuss the impact of the final rule on dynamic systems. The petitions requested a variety of changes to the rule, including:

- A complete exclusion of any vehicle equipped with a dynamic system,
- An exclusion of targets protected by a dynamic system,
- For targets protected by a dynamic system, a reduction of the free motion headform (FMH) impact speed from 15 miles per hour (mph) to 12 mph when tested without the dynamic system activated,
- The inclusion of a dynamic test in the standard, and
- Testing with the dynamic system activated.

Because these issues are outside the scope of the rulemaking that led to the August 18 final rule, it is not a proper subject for a petition for reconsideration. Therefore, the agency is treating the Mercedes-Benz petition, and the related portions of the BMW, Volkswagen and Volvo petitions as petitions for rulemaking, and is granting those petitions. Before publishing a notice of proposed rulemaking, the agency wishes to conduct some evaluations. To assist the agency in conducting these evaluations, this notice requests comments on the issues identified above.

Performance Evaluation

Currently, Standard No. 201 requires that a vehicle's instrument panel meet the Standard when impacted at a relative velocity of 15 miles per hour, with one exception. The exception is for vehicles that meet the occupant protection requirements of S5.1 of Standard No. 208, ''Occupant Crash Protection,'' by means of an inflatable restraint. Those vehicles need only meet the performance requirement when impacted at a relative velocity of 12 miles per hour.

The agency notes that while this exception appears to be similar to one of the changes requested by the petitions, there is an important distinction. The existing exception is premised upon the existence of a dynamic performance test that provides an objective evaluation of the protection provided by the inflatable restraint. That test provides assurance that the inflatable restraint provides protection that is a suitable substitute for the protection otherwise afforded by the Standard. However, the exception sought by the petitioners is not necessarily premised on the existence of such a test for evaluating the performance of dynamic systems. NHTSA believes that before it considers any changes in the requirements of the August 18 final rule, it should have a method of testing dynamic systems for a minimum level of performance. Since such a method does not now exist, one must be developed. Either there must be a single testing method appropriate for evaluating the performance of the wide range of dynamic systems under development, or there must be a variety of test methods that, together, are sufficient for testing all systems and ensuring that they provide equivalent protection.

NHTSA is aware of two categories of dynamic systems that are under consideration by the manufacturers. The first category is dynamically deployed padding. The dynamically deployed padding would provide improved protection for head impacts with the upper interior components already covered by the final rule. However, the dynamically deployed padding is anticipated to provide protection in higher severity impacts than that provided by the static padding which would otherwise be utilized to meet the requirements of the final rule. The second category includes dynamically deployed air bags or other inflatable devices such as BMW's Inflatable Tubular Structure. This technology provides head protection for impacts with various vehicle upper interior components. It also potentially affords protection for side impacts with external objects such as trees and poles or the front high hooded areas of a colliding vehicle.

Since the dynamic systems may have the potential to provide improved head protection beyond that provided by the final rule, the agency is considering rulemaking to allow them. However, as noted above, the agency believes that test procedures must be developed to evaluate the dynamic systems in order to assure that the protection afforded by the dynamic systems is a suitable substitute for that provided by the final rule.

A number of test procedures have been suggested. These include:

Procedures for Dynamically Deployed Padding

For targets protected by dynamically deployed padding, impact the targets with the FMH at 12 mph, prior to the deployment of the padding. The targets would be located using the existing procedures. Impact these same target locations again, this time at 20 mph, after deployment of the padding. The higher speed for testing the deployed padding is intended to assure that increased head protection is provided by the advanced technology. (For an explanation of the 20 mph test speed, see the questions below regarding benefits.) Conduct crash tests at 15–20 mph to ensure that sensors activate the deployment of the advanced padding under those conditions.

Procedures for Dynamically Deployed Air Bags and Other Inflatable Devices

(1) For targets protected by an air bag or other inflatable device, conduct FMH impacts at 12 mph. The advanced systems are not deployed for these tests. All other targets are tested at 15 mph.

(2) Conduct a side impact crash test of the vehicle into a 250 mm diameter rigid pole at 30 kph. The vertical centerline of the pole is aligned with the center of gravity of the dummy's head. The dummy's seat is positioned forward of the mid-seating location such that the dummy's head is sufficiently within the front window opening that the striking pole will not contact the B-pillar.

(3) Conduct a side impact crash test at 50 kph using the ISO 10997 moving deformable barrier (MDB) fitted with a rigid face whose top edge is not less than 1250 mm above the ground. The dummy's seat is positioned forward of the mid-seating location such that the dummy's head is sufficiently within the front window opening that the striking MDB can make direct head contact. The second and third test procedures for the ''dynamically deployed air bags and other inflatable devices'' were presented by the U.S. delegation to the ISO/TC 22/SC 10/WG 3 in its draft technical report, Document N100, ''Road Vehicles—Test Procedures of Evaluating Various Occupant Interactions with Deploying Side Impact Air Bags.''

To assist the agency in developing possible ways of evaluating performance, the agency requests answers to the following questions:

1. What test procedures could be used to measure the performance of a dynamic system?

2. What performance criteria would assure that advanced systems, when deployed, provide protection equivalent to that provided by countermeasures that meet the requirements of the final rule?

3. Are there other test methods appropriate for dynamic systems using full scale crash tests and an anthropomorphic test device?

4. If the agency were to propose a lower impact speed for targets protected by a dynamic system, are there components of the dynamic system which are not protected by the system but which could not meet the upper interior requirements at the current impact speed (15 mph)?

Benefits

The majority of dynamic systems known to NHTSA would offer occupant protection only in side impacts. The final rule was intended to provide head impact protection in frontal, side, and rollover crashes. Before deciding whether to propose amendments to accommodate vehicles with dynamic systems, NHTSA wishes to explore the nature and extent of any tradeoffs. To do this, it must compare the benefits provided by these dynamic systems with the benefits afforded by the final rule. Excluding targets or reducing the impact speed for targets would reduce the benefits for those targets in crashes which do not cause the dynamic system to deploy. Conversely, the dynamic systems may offer increased benefits when they do deploy. To assist the agency in evaluating the relative benefits of possible proposals, the agency requests answers to the following questions:

5. What effect would reducing test speeds have on injuries in non-deployment crashes?

6. What is the effectiveness of each dynamic system in reducing fatalities and injuries? What percent reduction in the various injury criteria (e.g., HIC) would result if these technologies were installed? Would this reduction vary by delta-V? If so, specify the relationship

between delta-V and injury criteria reduction for the specific system.

7. Could the dynamic systems cause increases in neck injuries? If so, what data are available to quantify this impact? What criteria can be used to determine whether lateral neck motion is increasing or causing injury?

8. Some advanced technologies appear to offer potential reductions in the likelihood of ejection. What would the effectiveness of dynamic systems be in reducing ejection in side or other impact modes or in a subsequent collision?

9. The dynamic systems known to NHTSA will deploy and protect the near-side occupant in a side impact. Will the dynamic system for the far-side occupant deploy in a side impact or in rollovers to protect against possible rebound effects or subsequent collision?

10. Do MY 1996 vehicles meet 12 mph test requirements? Do any MY 1996 vehicles meet 15 mph test requirements?

11. Should an impact speed higher than 15 mph be used in FMH testing of the system in order to compensate for the loss in benefits because the system does not deploy in rollover and frontal crashes? If so, is 20 mph an appropriate impact speed?

12. Are there existing accident data analyses concerning head injuries as a function of crash modes and target components?

Miscellaneous Questions

To allow NHTSA to become better acquainted with the dynamic systems under development, the agency requests answers to the following questions:

13. Are dynamic systems compatible with the B-pillar mounted shoulder anchorage point? Are integrated restraint seats (IRS), which have shoulder belt anchorages attached to the upper backseat, more compatible with the dynamic systems?

14. How much would the dynamic systems add to the price and weight of the vehicle?

15. What are the performance criteria for the sensor system designs? What is the time interval necessary for full deployment of the dynamic system?

16. If changes were made to the August 18 final rule, what is the anticipated time frame for introduction of dynamic systems? Are any dynamic systems being introduced prior to the requirements of the August 18 final rule?

17. Will the systems be introduced as optional or standard equipment?

Rulemaking Analyses and Notices

Executive Order 12866 and DOT Regulatory Policies and Procedures

This rulemaking document was reviewed under E.O. 12866, ''Regulatory Planning and Review.'' Further, this action has been determined to be ''significant'' under the Department of Transportation's regulatory policies and procedures because of anticipated public interest. Any anticipated rulemaking resulting from this notice would provide manufacturers with an alternative to the requirements in the August 18 final rule. A decision by a manufacturer to avail itself of the alternative would entail use of technology (i.e., dynamic systems) that may well be more costly than the padding which could be used to comply with the final rule. The agency solicits information from the manufacturers concerning those cost of those dynamic systems.

Executive Order 12612 (Federalism)

NHTSA has analyzed this notice in accordance with the principles and criteria contained in E.O. 12612, and has determined that it does not have significant federalism implications to warrant the preparation of a Federalism Assessment.

Submission of Comments

Interested persons are invited to submit comments. It is requested but not required that 10 copies be submitted.

All comments must not exceed 15 pages in length. (49 CAR 553.21). Necessary attachments may be appended to these submissions without regard to the 15-page limit. This limitation is intended to encourage commenters to detail their primary arguments in a concise fashion.

If a commenter wishes to submit certain information under a claim of confidentiality, three copies of the complete submission, including purportedly confidential business information, should be submitted to the Chief Counsel, NHTSA, at the street address given above, and seven copies from which the purportedly confidential information has been deleted should be submitted to the Docket Section. A request for confidentiality should be accompanied by a cover letter setting forth the information specified in the agency's confidential business information regulation. 49 CFR Part 512.

All comments received before the close of business on the comment closing date indicated above will be considered, and will be available for examination in the docket at the above address both before and after that date. To the extent possible, comments filed after the closing date will also be considered. Comments will be available for inspection in the docket. The NHTSA will continue to file relevant information as it becomes available in the docket after the closing date, and it is recommended that interested persons continue to examine the docket for new material.

Those persons desiring to be notified upon receipt of their comments in the rules docket should enclose a self-addressed, stamped postcard in the envelope with their comments. Upon receiving the comments, the docket supervisor will return the postcard by mail.

(Authority: 49 U.S.C. 322, 30111, 30115, 30117, and 30166; delegation of authority at 49 CFR 1.50)

Issued on March 1, 1996.

Barry Felrice,

Associate Administrator for Safety Performance Standards.

[FR Doc. 96–5292 Filed 3–6–96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910–59–P

Surface Transportation Board

49 CFR Parts 1201 and 1262

[Ex Parte No. 512]

Uniform System of Records of Property Changes for Railroad Companies

AGENCY: Surface Transportation Board, DOT.

ACTION: Proposed rule, withdrawal.

SUMMARY: The Surface Transportation Board (the Board) is withdrawing the proposed rule and discontinuing the Ex Parte No. 512 proceeding.

DATES: This withdrawal is made on March 7, 1996.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Beryl Gordon, (202) 927–5610. [TDD for the hearing impaired: (202) 927–5721].

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Effective January 1, 1996, the ICC Termination Act of 1995, Pub. L. No. 104–88, 109 Stat. 803 (ICCTA) abolished the Interstate Commerce Commission (the Commission) and established within the Department of Transportation. Section 204 of the ICCTA provides that ''[t]he Board shall promptly rescind all regulations established by the [Commission] that are based on provisions of law repealed and not substantively reenacted by this Act.'' Former 49 U.S.C. 10784, the statutory basis for the Part 1262 rail valuation regulations, has been repealed.