a Class IIb, Class IIc or Class U (as identified in Pettyjohn et al., 1991; EPA Document: EPA/600/2–91/043, August 1991; see Attachment A), the public water systems that rely on these aquifers shall not be designated as USAs.

Filter Criteria #5: For CWS and NTNCWS that obtain their water supply primarily from ground water sources, where the source aquifer is identified as a Class I or Class IIa (as identified in Pettyjohn et al., 1991; EPA Document: EPA/600/2–91/043, August 1991; see Attachment A), and the aquifer is designated as a sole source aquifer, an area twice the WHPA shall be designated as an USA.

Issued in Washington, DC, on May 23, 1966.

Richard B. Felder,

Associate Administrator for Pipeline Safety.

Attachment A

Recommended Data Source: EPA Report 600/2–91/043. Regional Assessment of Aquifer Vulnerability and Sensitivity in the Conterminous United States. Office of Research and Development, Washington, DC. 319pp.

The following information was obtained from pages 6–8 of the above report:

CLASS I AQUIFERS (Surficial or shallow, permeable units; highly vulnerable to contamination).

Unconsolidated Aquifers (Class Ia): Class la aquifers consist of surficial, unconsolidated, and permeable alluvial, terrace, outwash, beach, dune and other similar deposits. These units generally contain layers of sand and gravel that, commonly, are interbedded to some degree with silt and clay. Not all deposits mapped as Class la are important water-bearing units, but they are likely to be both permeable and vulnerable. The only natural protection of aquifers of this class is the thickness of the unsaturated zone and the presence of fine-grained material.

Soluble and Fractured Bedrock Aquifers (Class Ib): Lithologies in this class include limestone, dolomite, and locally, evaporitic units that contain documented karst features or solution channels, regardless of size. Generally these systems have a wide range in permeability * * * Also included in this class are sedimentary strata, and metamorphic and igneous (intrusive and extrusive) rocks that are significantly faulted, fractured, or jointed. In all cases groundwater movement is largely controlled by secondary openings. Well yields range widely, but the important feature is the potential for rapid vertical and lateral ground water movement along preferred pathways, which result in a high degree of vulnerability.

Semiconsolidated Aquifers (Class Ic): Semiconsolidated systems generally contain poorly to moderately indurated sand and gravel that is interbedded with clay and silt. This group is intermediate to the unconsolidated and consolidated end members. These systems are common in the Tertiary age rocks that are exposed throughout the Gulf and Atlantic coastal states. Semiconsolidated conditions also arise from the presence of intercalated clay and caliche within primarily unconsolidated to poorly consolidated units, such as occurs in parts of the High Plains Aquifer.

Covered Aquifers (Class Id): This class consists of any Class I aquifer that is overlain by less than 50 feet of low permeability, unconsolidated material, such as glacial till, lacustrian, and loess deposits.

CLASS II AQUIFERS (Consolidated bedrock aquifers; moderately vulnerable).

Higher Yield Bedrock Aquifers (Class IIa): These aquifers generally consist of fairly permeable sandstone or conglomerate that contain lesser amounts of interbedded fine grained clastics (shale, siltstone, mudstone) and occasionally carbonate units. In general, well yields must exceed 50 gpm to be included in this class. Locally fracturing may contribute to the dominant primary porosity and permeability of these systems.

Lower Yield Bedrock Aquifers (Class IIb): In most cases, these aquifers consist of sedimentary or crystalline rocks. Most commonly, lower yield systems consist of the same classic rock types present in the higher yield systems, but in the former case grain size is generally smaller and the degree of cementation or induration is greater, both of which lead to a lower permeability. In many existing and ancient mountain regions, such as the Appalachians (Blue Ridge and Piedmont), the core consists of crystalline rocks that are fractured to some degree. Well yields are commonly less than 50 gpm, although they may be larger in valleys than on interstream divides.

Covered Bedrock Aquifers (Class IIc): This group consists of Class IIa and IIb aquifers that are overlain by less than 50 feet of unconsolidated material of loq permeability, such as glacial till, lacustrian, or loess deposits. It is assumed that most Class V wells are relatively shallow and, therefore, 50 feet or less of fine grained cover could reduce but not necessarily eliminate the vulnerability of underlying Class II systems.

CLASS III (Consolidated or unconsolidated aquifers that are overlain by more than 50 feet of low permeability material; low vulnerability).

Aquifers of this type are the least vulnerable of all the classes because they are naturally protected by a thick layer of fine grained material, such as glacial till or shale. Examples include parts of the Northern Great Plains where the Pierre Shale of Cretaceous age crops out over thousands of square miles and is hundreds of feet thick. In many of the glaciated states, till forms an effective cover over bedrock or buried outwash aquifers, and elsewhere alternating layers of shale, siltstone, and fine grained sandstone insulate and protect the deeper major water bearing zones * * *

CLASS U (Undifferentiated aquifers): This classification is used where several lithologic and hydrologic conditions are present within a mappable area. Units are assigned to this class because of constraints of mapping scale, the presenece of undelineated members within a formation or group, or the presence of nonuniformly occurring features, such as fracturing. This class is intended to convey a wider range of vulnerability than is usually contained within any other single class.

SUBCLASS V (Variable covered aquifers): The modifier ''v'', such as Class IIa–v, is used to describe areas where an undetermined or highly variable thickness of low permeability sediments overlie the major water bearing zone. To provide the largest amount of information, the underlying aquifer was mapped as if the cover were absent, and the ''v'' designation was added to the classification. The ''v'' indicates that a variable thickness of low permeability material covers the aquifer and, since the thickness of the cover, to a large degree, controls vulnerability, this aspect is undefined.

[FR Doc. 96–13530 Filed 5–30–96; 8:45 am]

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National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

49 CFR Part 571

[Docket No. 96–51, Notice 01]

RIN 2127–AG16

Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards Door Locks and Door Retention Components

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

ACTION: Grant of petition for rulemaking.

SUMMARY: This notice grants a petition for rulemaking submitted by Independent Mobility Systems, Inc. (IMS), to exclude wheelchair ramps from the Federal motor vehicle safety standard that establishes performance requirements for door locks and door retention components. Since side doors equipped with wheelchair lifts are excluded from the standard, the petitioner requests that the standard be amended to also exclude side doors equipped with wheelchair ramps.

NHTSA believes that the amendment suggested by IMS merits further research and study. To that extent, therefore, the agency grants IMS' petition. The granting of this petition, however, does not necessarily mean that a rule will be issued.

The determination of whether to issue a rule will be made in the course of the rulemaking proceeding in accordance with statutory criteria.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: *For technical issues:* Mr. Maurice Hicks, Light Duty Vehicle Division, Office of Crashworthiness Standards, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Washington, DC 20590; telephone (202) 366–6345; facsimile (202) 366–4329.

For legal issues: Walter Myers, Office of the Chief Counsel, National Highway

Traffic Safety Administration, Washington, DC 20590; telephone (202) 366–2992; facsimile (202) 366–3820.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Federal motor vehicle safety standard (Standard) No. 206, Door locks and door retention components, specifies strength requirements for door locks and door retention components, including latches, hinges, locks, and other door supporting means. The purpose of the standard is to minimize the likelihood of inadvertent door opening and consequent occupant ejection from the vehicle in the event of a crash or other unintended release of the door latch. Excluded from the requirements of the standard are, among others:

> [S]ide doors which are equipped with wheelchair lifts and which are linked to an alarm system consisting of either a flashing visible signal located in the driver's compartment or an alarm audible to the driver which is activated when the door is open.

This exclusion was added to paragraph S4 of the standard by final rule dated March 27, 1985 (50 FR 12029), in response to a petition for rulemaking submitted by Thomas Built Buses, Inc. The agency's rationale for excluding doors equipped with wheelchair lifts was that when lifts of the Thomas Built design were retracted, they were secured in position by either hydraulic pressure in the extension/retraction cylinders and mechanical latches, or by electrically-operated drive mechanisms. The metal grate floors of the lifts were stowed in a vertical position parallel to and in close proximity with the interior surface of the vehicle door. Thus, in its retracted position, the wheelchair lift could provide an adequate barrier to occupant ejection from the vehicle if the door were to open while the vehicle was moving or if involved in a collision. The final rule also required a visual or audible alarm system designed to be activated if the door opened while the ignition was on. Such alarm would ensure that the lift is kept in its retracted position and the door is kept closed while the vehicle is in operation.

On May 18, 1995, IMS wrote a letter to NHTSA stating that the company converts minivans into wheelchair accessible vehicles by lowering the vehicle floor and adding a wheelchair ramp to the right rear sliding door area. The ramp retracts into a vertical position parallel to and in close proximity to the vehicle door when not in use. IMS also equips the doors with an audible and/or visual alarm system. IMS asked, therefore, whether the exclusion of wheelchair lifts from the provisions of Standard No. 206 would also apply to the wheelchair ramps with which IMS equips its vehicle conversions. NHTSA responded that the term ''wheelchair lifts'' did not include wheelchair ramps. The agency noted that the two components shared many similar characteristics, however, and that IMS was free to petition the agency for rulemaking to amend the standard by adding wheelchair ramps to the current exclusions from the standard.

The Petition

IMS petitioned the agency to amend Standard No. 206 to exclude from the standard those multipurpose passenger vehicles (MPV) that are equipped with wheelchair ramps for the transportation of wheelchair users. IMS argued that because wheelchair lifts and ramps serve the same purpose and are similarly configured when in the stowed position, the rationale for excluding wheelchair lifts from the standard should also apply to wheelchair ramps. Accordingly, IMS urged that paragraph S4 of the standard be amended to exclude wheelchair ramps from the standard in addition to the existing exclusions.

Agency Analysis and Decision

The IMS petition requesting exclusion of ramps from the standard is based on the similarity of performance characteristics of wheelchair lifts and ramps. NHTSA evaluation, however, has revealed several structural differences between the IMS ramp and the Thomas Built lift on which the current exclusion was based. In fact, most ramps and lifts currently produced are structurally different from the Thomas Built lift.

A schematic of the IMS ramp is shown in Figure 1. The IMS ramp operates much like a lift, in that it retracts into the vehicle in a vertical position that is parallel to and in close proximity of the vehicle door. However, in its retracted position, the ramp can detach and swing open like a gate to permit ingress and egress of ambulatory people, with a latch at the lower part of the gate to hold it in place. Finally, the IMS ramp in question, when in the retracted position, does not completely cover the doorway opening. The ramp folds into the vehicle to a position that covers from one-half to three- fourths of the doorway, the intent being to avoid obstructing the driver's vision to the side.

NHTSA's evaluation of the lift and ramp designs revealed a wide variety of lift and ramp designs produced by other manufacturers, including those that retract under the vehicle, those that suspend within the door sill (which lifts the wheelchair user by means of a pulley), those that retract within the vehicle parallel to the floor, and some that are, like the IMS ramp, detachable from at least one side. Also like the IMS ramp, many lifts and ramps produced by other manufacturers do not cover the entire door.

In order to install the IMS ramp in a vehicle, the vehicle is altered by lowering the floor between the firewall and the rear axle. This alteration is commonly performed on most lift/ramp-equipped vans and MPVs. The original floor is replaced with an interior panel of 16-gauge steel and an exterior panel of 18-gauge steel. Both are hollow z-member panels which together have an equivalent thickness of one inch. The lower edge of the side sliding door is extended to meet the lowered floor and the lower track of the sliding door is refitted to accommodate the larger door. Structurally, the sliding track guide is similar to the vehicle's original track guide for non-electric doors. For electric doors, however, the design is significantly different. Specifically, the installation of the electric IMS ramp requires that the latch be disabled to accommodate the electric track closing and opening the door.

Because of the many different designs of wheelchair lifts and ramps currently being produced, the agency is concerned that its exclusion of wheelchair lifts from the requirements of the standard, based on the then-current Thomas Built design, may be overly broad. At the same time, the agency believes that wheelchair ramps and lifts are essential to the safe and efficient transportation of persons with disabilities. Accordingly, the change requested by IMS warrants further investigation and research into the installation and manner of operation of the various wheelchair lift and ramp designs currently in production, with a view toward adoption of uniform criteria for both. To that extent, therefore, the agency grants the IMS petition.

The granting of the IMS petition, however, does not necessarily mean that a rule will be issued. The determination of whether to issue a rule is made after study of the requested action and the various alternatives thereto in the course of the rulemaking proceeding, in accordance with statutory criteria.

List of Subjects in 49 CFR Part 571

Imports, Motor vehicle safety, Motor vehicles, Rubber and rubber products, Tires.

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

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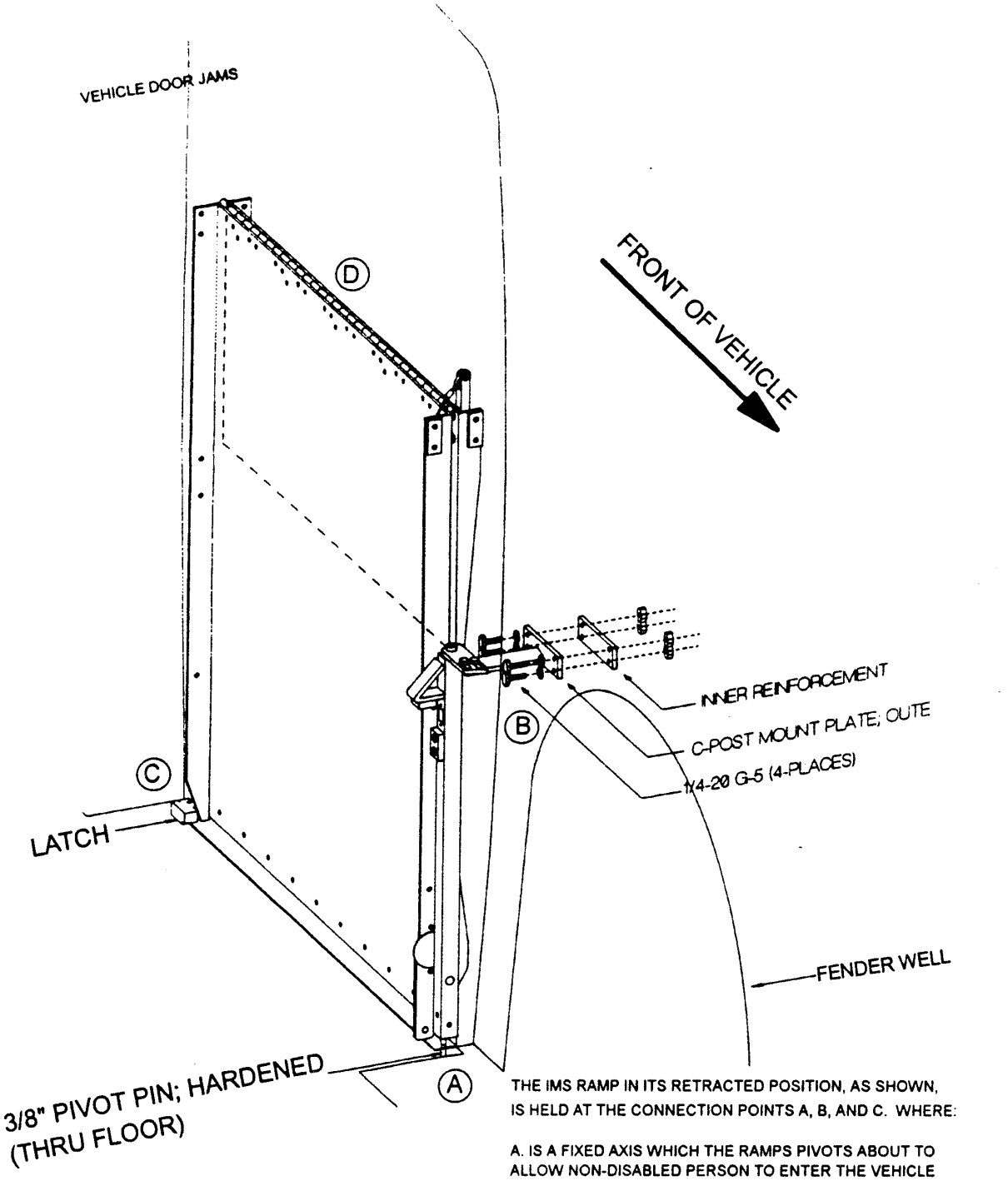
FIGURE 1 - IMS ELECTRIC RAMP CONFIGURATION



THE IMS RAMP IN ITS RETRACTED POSITION, AS SHOWN, IS HELD AT THE CONNECTION POINTS A, B, AND C. WHERE:

A. IS A FIXED AXIS WHICH THE RAMPS PIVOTS ABOUT TO ALLOW NON-DISABLED PERSON TO ENTER THE VEHICLE

B. IS A CONNECTION POINT AND MANUAL RELEASE TO ALLOW THE RAMP TO EXTRACT FROM THE VEHICLE.

C. IS A CONNECTION POINT WITH A LATCH WHICH PREVENTS THE RAMP FROM PIVOTING ABOUT POINT A.

D. IS THE LOWER PART OF THE RAMP WHICH EXTENDS WHILE THE RAMP IS EXTRACTING FROM THE VEHICLE.

Issued on May 27, 1996.

Barry Felrice,

Associate Administrator for Safety Performance Standards.

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