

Media Release

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Attention: Editors

Crash study reveals improved safety in today's cars

The second report of the ongoing Australian National Crash Investigation Study (ANCIS) was released earlier today. This collaborative research project brings together Monash University researchers, automobile manufacturers, Federal and State Government transport and insurance agencies, a vehicle parts supplier and Australian motoring clubs. The study aims to monitor the crash performance of modern cars and the roads and environment in which they travel.

Six years of the road safety program have been completed and the program is now entering its third triennial funding round. It is currently run in three states in Australia, with other states expected to join the program in the near future.

A number of important facts for road safety have been revealed to date:

- The improved crashworthiness of modern cars is demonstrated by the fact that, across all types of crashes, drivers and front-seat passengers in cars manufactured between 1993 and 2003 were less than one third as likely to receive a head injury than drivers in cars built between 1982 and 1992.
- In side impacts, people on the non-struck side (the opposite side to the colliding object or vehicle) were less likely to be seriously injured than those on the struck side of the vehicle. However, when occupants on the non-struck side were injured, they were more than twice as likely to suffer a serious head injury than those on the struck side.
- Occupants involved in single vehicle crashes sustained more serious injuries than those who crashed into other vehicles.

"The findings demonstrate the need for car occupants to wear their seatbelts and ensure that their cars are fitted with the latest safety technology to reduce their chance of receiving serious injuries in a collision," said Professor Brian Fildes, Chief Investigator and Chair of Road Safety at the Monash University Accident Research Centre.

Occupants were recruited into the study if they were hospitalised as a result of a car crash and voluntarily agreed to participate. The vehicle in which they were travelling had to be a passenger vehicle.

Monash University Accident Research Centre nurses conducted interviews with the participants and examined their medical records to compile a detailed list of their injuries. Researchers also examined the vehicles, visited the crash site, obtained police reports and used all data to determine the crash circumstances, injury causation factors, crashworthiness of the vehicle and contributing factors. Up until the end of 2006, around 450 cases were available for analysis.

Professor Fildes said ANCIS had a number of potential benefits, including examining ways of improving the crashworthiness of the vehicle, evaluating the effectiveness of new safety technology

such as front and side airbags, improved restraint systems, side impact protection, seatbelt reminders and new crash avoidance technologies.

He said the study would also help identify emerging crash trends and new ways to address injury prevention on Australian roads. ANCIS also highlights the need for a safe-system approach to road safety through safer vehicles, safer roads and roadsides, safer behaviour and safer speeds.

Professor Fildes noted that the study confirmed the high incidence of single vehicle collisions (44% of the sample overall and 58% in rural areas) and the serious injuries often associated with such crashes, as well as the large number of crashes at intersections on Australian roads.

Data is also being used to help educate road safety professionals from all over Victoria of innovative ways of addressing trauma in their region. ANCIS is a unique coalition in Australia, uniting an important group of key safety stakeholders in road safety to address reducing the burden of road trauma in this country.

The report is available online at <http://www.monash.edu.au/muarc/>

For more information please contact chief investigator Brian Fildes on 0419 375 909 or co-investigator David Logan on (03) 9905 4376.

ANCIS Members:

- Autoliv Australia
- Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources (DIER), Tasmania
- Department of Transport and Regional Services
- Ford Motor Company of Australia
- GM Holden Ltd
- Insurance Australia Ltd
- Motor Accidents Authority (NSW)
- National Roads and Motorists' Association (NRMA) Ltd
- Roads and Traffic Authority (NSW)
- Royal Automobile Club of Victoria (RACV) Ltd
- Toyota Motor Corporation Australia Ltd
- Transport Accident Commission
- Vicroads

Observers:

- Australian Automobile Association
- Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries (FCAI)
- Mitsubishi Motors Australia Ltd