

For more information contact:

Fairley Washington

Saj Sosseh

202-638-5944

25,000 CRASHES A YEAR DUE TO VEHICLE-RELATED ROAD DEBRIS, STUDY FINDS

According to new research released by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, vehicle parts, cargo, or other material that has been unintentionally discharged from vehicles onto the roadway is estimated to cause over 25,000 crashes per year in North America resulting in approximately 80-90 fatalities.

"Although vehicle-related road debris (VRRD) crashes are generally less severe than other crashes, individual incidents can be catastrophic," says Peter Kissinger, President and CEO of the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. "Moreover, many of the estimated 25,000 VRRD crashes can be prevented if truckers and motorists secure their loads properly and report debris that they encounter on the road."

The report "The Safety Impact of Vehicle Related-Road Debris" estimated the magnitude of the VRRD safety problem (i.e., frequency and severity of VRRD crashes). Intus Road Safety Engineering, Inc. conducted the research through an extensive literature review, identification and analysis of existing crash data, as well as surveys of current state and provincial practices for preventing and removing VRRD.

A survey of road authorities in the U.S. and Canada on maintenance practices found the three most prevalent forms of VRRD include tire treads, garbage from waste haulers, and lumber and construction materials.

The report recommends several low-cost educational and enforcement approaches as potential countermeasures to prevent VRRD crashes and to reduce crash severity when they occur:

- Educating motorists on load securement and reporting unsafe vehicles, unsecured loads, and road debris
- Educating the motorists on defensive driving, especially around trucks in the event of wheel and tire separations
- Educating fleet maintenance personnel on preventing wheel separations
- Training commercial vehicle drivers to periodically inspect their vehicles and cargo
- Training enforcement officials in vehicle safety and load securement
- Targeting specific groups for enforcement (e.g., waste haulers, landscapers)

- Enacting stricter laws on load securement

Research performed by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety can be found at www.aaafoundation.org . The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety is an independent, publicly funded, 501 (c)(3) charitable research and educational organization established in 1947 by the American Automobile Association. The AAA Foundation's mission is to prevent traffic deaths and injuries by conducting research into their causes and by educating the public about strategies to prevent crashes and reduce the impact when they do occur.

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