

After Market Equipment In Emergency Services Vehicles

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) research shows that some aftermarket items mounted in the passenger compartment can interfere with air bag deployment or can be propelled into occupants, causing moderate to severe injuries.

The National Center for Statistics and Analysis's Special Crash Investigations Program has discovered several situations in which laptop computers have caused injuries to police officers. These injuries are occurring due to communication terminals, warning devices, etc., mounted in the deployment path of passenger-side air bags. The deployment of the air bag causes objects in the deployment path to become flying projectiles.

Any piece of aftermarket equipment mounted to, in front of, or on top of the instrument panel of an air-bag-equipped vehicle poses a risk of interfering with the normal deployment path of the air bag, decreasing its effectiveness, or becoming a projectile inside the passenger compartment.

Because of these risks, it is imperative that the parties responsible for installing aftermarket equipment in emergency services vehicles, public utility vehicles, and other service vehicles check with the appropriate manufacturers' representatives to get guidance for safe mounting locations and practices.

What This Means For Counties

The mounting or locating of equipment in the front seat/dashboard area of any county vehicle needs to be evaluated and existing procedures revised if necessary. Directions for obtaining some of this information from the suppliers of law enforcement/emergency services vehicles can be obtained by consulting the police/fleet owner guide supplement in the glove box of the vehicle.

For more information, contact CTSI at 303-861-0507.

Drivers of 15 Passenger Vans are Urged to be Safe by NHTSA Report

June through August is the deadliest time of the year for 15-passenger van occupants, new research from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) states.

A report released in 2008 states that 31 percent of fatal rollovers involve 15-passenger vans during the summer travel months. NHTSA officials warn that while overall statistics show the number of deaths has been declining steadily since 2001, the vehicles still pose a safety risk to occupants. In 2006, 58 people died in accidents involving 15-passenger vans.

Factors that contribute to fatalities in such crashes include fully loaded vans, lack of seat belts, improperly inflated tires, poor tire condition and inexperienced drivers.

What This Means For Counties

For those counties that utilize 15 passenger vans, they will need to focus on existing procedures related to the safe use of the vans owned and operated, and identify any of the factors that may contribute to a fatality in the event of a crash.