

# Forum

A monthly publication reporting on issues affecting the insurance industry in Ohio

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Representing Ohio's property/casualty insurance industry

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Vehicle-safety engineers have spent decades improving passenger safety. Now, car makers are starting to make design changes that would make vehicles less deadly in collisions with pedestrians.

The shift comes as safety regulators in Europe, Japan and the United States are starting to pay more attention to the tens of thousands of deaths and injuries world-wide resulting when drivers crash vehicles into people on bicycles and on foot.

In the United States, 5,600 pedestrians and cyclists were killed by cars in 2001 and 123,000 more were injured, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. In the European Union, some 8,000 pedestrians and cyclists are killed and 300,000 more are injured annually as the result of car accidents. In Japan, some 2,500 pedestrians and bikers are killed and 80,000 injured by automobiles every year.

Pedestrian deaths overall are declining, but the increase in sales of sport-utility vehicles is a troubling trend for people worried about pedestrian safety. A study published in December in the journal *Accident Analysis & Prevention* found that a pedestrian struck by an SUV is twice as likely to die as a pedestrian struck by a car. □

Thieves target a wide range of popular passenger vehicles, often seeking valuable parts from older model year vehicles for sale on the black market.

The most popular sedans – the Toyota Camry, Honda Accord and Ford Taurus are particularly attractive targets, along with sport utility vehicles (SUVs), pickup trucks and mini-vans, according to a study by the National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB), a not-for-profit insurance organization committed to combating vehicle theft and insurance fraud.

NICB said the ten most commonly stolen vehicles in the United State in 2002 were: (the most popular year stolen is in parenthesis.)

- Toyota Camry (1989)
- Honda Accord (1994)
- Honda Civic (2000)
- Chevrolet Full Size C/K Pickup (1992)
- Ford Full Size Pickup (150/250/350) (1997)
- Jeep Cherokee/Grand Cherokee (1993)
- Oldsmobile Cutlass/Supreme/Ciera (1986)
- Dodge Caravan/Grand Caravan (1994)
- Ford Taurus (1996)
- Toyota Corolla (2001)

## Pedestrian Safety

Automakers work to make vehicles less deadly in collisions with pedestrians

## Auto Theft

Up slightly nationwide, statewide

## Auto Theft

Continued

“These vehicles are most often taken for their parts which are no longer manufactured and are too difficult or expensive to obtain,” said Robert M. Bryant, president and chief executive officer of NICB. “These vehicles also are stolen for illegal export to Central and South America or Europe,” he added.

The FBI reported that an estimated 1.2 million vehicle thefts were reported in 2002. The nation’s vehicle theft rate per 100,000 people was up slightly – 1.4 percent in 2002, marking the third consecutive year of increases in the auto theft rate following a ten year decline. The estimated total value of stolen motor vehicles was \$8.2 billion.

Ohio’s auto theft picture, up 1.3 percent statewide between 2001 and 2002 reflects the overall national trend. An OII comparison of 2002 thefts to vehicle registrations indicates one vehicle stolen for every 282 registered in the state, a slight improvement from the 2001 ratio of 1 in 275, yet somewhat worse than the 2000 ratio of one theft for every 299 registered vehicles. □

## Auto Safety For Kids

Program focuses on parents with less income, education

Most parents have gotten the message that children are safer in the back seat of the car, but parents with less income and education disproportionately have not, according to a survey. In response, safety officials have put together a program to distribute safety information with the food vouchers given to mothers of young children under a federal program.

In 2002, figures show 324 children were killed in the front seats of cars. If those children had been in the back seat, 100 would have survived, safety experts say, and thousands of others would have been hurt less severely or not at all if they had been in back.

According to the federally sponsored Air Bag and Seat Belt Safety Campaign, about 1,700 children’s lives have been saved since 1996 because they were in the back seat.

The survey, by Public Opinion Strategies, questioned 800 adults of all ethnic backgrounds, and an additional sampling of 300 African-American adults and 363 Hispanics, all of whom said they transported children 12 and younger. The survey found that 6 percent of all adults said they put children 12 and younger in the front seat. Eleven percent of African-Americans and 7 percent of Hispanics said they did so. Researchers also found that people with lower incomes and educations were more likely to put children in the front seat. □



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