



NEWS

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Probe continues after 50 die in tragic Buffalo plane crash, But what about 400 killed each month in big-rig/car wrecks?

ATLANTA – While the news media is still covering the tragedy and the nation is still mourning the death of 50 people killed in the tragic crash of a commuter plane near Buffalo, NY on Feb. 12, the highway-safety advocacy group Road Safe America points out that 400 people a month are killed in car-truck highway crashes with no national media attention, widespread investigation or public outcry.

“What about them, what about the 400 truckers and motorists killed each month in wrecks involving big-rigs and passenger vehicles?” asks Stephen C. Owings, co-founder along with his wife, Susan, of the non-profit Road Safe America (www.roadsafeamerica.org).

“The death of 400 people each month in highway wrecks involving big rigs and passenger vehicles is equal to two Boeing 757 airliners crashing and killing all aboard month after month after month, an unbelievable, intolerable nightmare scenario,” said Owings. “And yet, in a tragedy involving the crash of one plane and the death of 50 people, investigations commence – and rightly so – at numerous levels of government while the fatal incident receives intense media and public scrutiny for weeks and even months. Fatal car-truck crashes on our highways have reached disaster levels, and there is no government or media outcry to lessen the death and suffering on the ground. Why?”

Steve and Susan Owings founded Road Safe America after their son, Cullum, was killed in 2002 when his car – stopped in an interstate traffic jam – was crushed from behind by a speeding tractor trailer truck on cruise control going 7 mph above the posted speed limit.

Since its founding, Road Safe America has been joined by the American Trucking Associations, all national safety advocacy organizations, numerous trucking firms, business executives, insurance companies and thousands of citizens in seeking a national regulation requiring activation of electronic speed limiting governors set at 65 mph on all trucks 13 tons and up built after 1992.

The Bush Administration opposed it the regulation requiring governors.

All trucks 13 tons and up built since 1992 already come with the speed governors installed, but drivers are not required to use them. It would be a simple task to activate the governors and initiate a common sense, inexpensive regulation that would save the lives of many of the approximately 4,000 motorists and 1,000 truckers killed each year in crashes involving big trucks.

Road Safe America and its supporters are working with the Obama Administration to have the speed governor regulation adopted.

FUEL SAVINGS

If saving lives is not motivation enough to support this cause, in this era of dependency on foreign sources of oil, consider the fact that activation of speed governing technology is already being applied by many trucking firms as a way to cut fuel use as well as improve safety. With a reduction of only 5 mph, millions of gallons of fuel can be saved annually in the nation's trucking fleet.

The European Union, Australia, Japan and the Canadian provinces of Ontario and Quebec have regulations requiring speed limiting devices set at 65 mph or slower on all large trucks. Sadly, instead of showing international leadership, the U.S. is behind the rest of the world in this area.

According to Australian government statistics, Australia experienced a reduction of 26.5 percent in heavy truck fatalities between 2002 and 2004 through speed governor requirements, aggressive fatigue management programs, random drug testing and seatbelt promotion within the trucking industry.

“No one at Road Safe America is anti-trucking or anti-trucker,” said Owings. “In fact, the opposite is the case. In terms of annual deaths and injuries, trucking is the most dangerous profession in America, and we want to change that. We are trying to educate drivers of passenger autos and other vehicles about the need to operate more safely around large trucks because of the dangers present. Trucking is an absolutely vital industry to the economic health and prosperity of our nation. However, by limiting the maximum speeds of heavy commercial trucks, we know that many more drivers will make it home to their families at the end of a long run, and more motorists will live to see their loved ones again as well.”
