

Draft Minutes of the Blue Ribbon Panel for Evaluation of Advanced Airbags

January 20, 2004

Chairperson, Dr. Susan Ferguson, called the meeting to order at 9:00 A.M. in Room 204 at the Double Tree Surfcomber Hotel in Miami Beach, Florida. All panel members and observers were present with the exception of observer Robert Strassburger. Also in attendance were Don Floyd from G.M. and Dave Clark from Ford (both were invited to attend to discuss the presentations they are scheduled to make on behalf of the auto industry at the upcoming second public meeting).

Dr. Ferguson asked if everyone had an opportunity to review the minutes of the November 17, 2003 meeting and if any changes were required. Hearing no further comments, and noting that several comments that were received by email would be incorporated; the minutes were approved as written.

Dr. Ferguson noted that a letter has been sent to a number of Congressional Committees asking for the opportunity to brief them on the progress to date of the Blue Ribbon Panel. She said that she will call the Committees later this week to firm up a date for the briefings, noting that it would likely be sometime in February.

Dr. Ferguson then ran through a draft of the presentation that was put together for the Congressional briefing. The presentation includes the background, composition and progress to date for the BRP. Various panel members noted suggestions for additions, corrections and deletions. Dr. Ferguson asked Chip Chidester to supply updated counts for the number of crashes investigated for both the Alliance funded PSUs and the NASS PSUs.

Dr. Ferguson noted that the official title of the BRP has been shortened in the interest of brevity and clarity of purpose to: Blue Ribbon Panel for the Evaluation of Advanced Airbags.

Dave Clark ran through a presentation explaining elements of advanced technology restraint systems that are used on current production or near-term future Ford Motor Company vehicles. In response to a suggestion from Don Bischoff, Clark agreed that the presentation should include some of the more advanced technologies such as dynamic sensing of occupant location that are being investigated by manufacturers. Chip Chidester said he would send Dave some slides that depicted some of these technologies. Clark agreed to broaden the presentation to include additional subsystems in use by other manufacturers and a discussion of the advanced and experimental occupant-sensing technologies.

Don Floyd ran through a presentation on Event Data Recorders (EDRs). The presentation included the history of EDRs, typical data captured, comparison of EDRs to Flight Data Recorders, tools and methodology for readout and the importance of EDR data to the evaluation of advanced airbag systems. The Panel once again collectively

noted their recognition of the importance of EDR data to the understanding/evaluation of advanced airbag performance; e.g. whether one or both levels of air bag deployment took place during the crash.

Chip Chidester ran through a presentation on the status of Special Crash Investigations and airbag related fatality data and changes to NASS. Data included the number of NASS CDS investigations for 2003, including a breakout of those at the Alliance funded PSUs. He also described a new ORACLE to SAS database which should provide much greater analysis capabilities for researchers. This database will be published yearly along with the SAS database that NASS has historically published.

Chip next ran through a presentation entitled “Monitoring the Performance of Certified Advanced Air Bags.” This is NHTSA’s Special Crash Investigations program to get an early readout of the performance of airbag systems that have been certified as compliant with the latest version of FMVSS 208. Chip noted that either he or John Brophy would make the presentation at the Public Meeting.

Dr. Schneider ran through his presentation: “Comparison of Frontal-Crash Protection for Front Seat Occupants in Pre-1998 and 1998+ Model-Year Vehicles.” Dr. Schneider said that the analysis was trying to answer two basic questions: 1) Is there a reduction in airbag induced injuries? 2) Is there a reduction in overall effectiveness for 1998 and newer airbags compared with pre-1998 air bags? The presentation would be an update of the presentation Dr. Schneider made at the 2003 Public Meeting; he was not sure there would be enough new data to make it worthwhile. Dr. Schneider will review the available data and decide in concert with Dr. Ferguson whether to schedule the presentation for the upcoming Public Meeting.

Dr. Segui-Gomez ran through a presentation entitled: “Changes in Injury Patterns in Frontal Crashes: Injuries to Drivers of Vehicles Model Years 1993-1997 vs. Drivers of Vehicles 1998-2003. This is a NASS based statistical analysis of injury trends in pre- and post- depowered airbags. Several minor corrections/additions were addressed by the Panel.

Dr. Ferguson presented an analysis entitled: “Driver Deaths in Frontal Crashes: Comparison of Older and Newer Airbags,” authored by Elisa Braver of IIHS. This is a FARS based analysis to look at the relative driver frontal death rates in sled-certified 1998 and 1999 model vehicles compared with 1997 model vehicles that were barrier-certified. Minor changes were suggested by various Panel members.

Dennis Durbin, M.D., of Children’s Hospital of Pennsylvania, Partners for Child Passenger Safety, ran through a presentation entitled: “Variation in Performance of Second Generation Air Bags for Child Occupants by Type of Vehicle.” There was a discussion of the appropriate age groups for analyses of harm to children in crashes. It was agreed that it probably made more sense to cut off at the 12 year-old rather than 15 year-old since 12 years is currently the age recommended for riding in the back seat. Dr. Durbin will modify the presentation to cut off at the 12 year-old.

Dr. Kennerly Digges ran through a presentation entitled: "Summary of CIREN Data." The presentation details the harm attributed to airbags in pre- and post-1998 model-year vehicles. Dr. Digges will update this presentation with the latest cases from both CIREN and NASS.

Dr. Digges then presented a number of cases illustrating both successes and failures in airbag system performance. The Panel agreed that while the cases were interesting that the presentation was not suited to the Public Meeting. Dr. Digges agreed. He handed out hard copy of the case details to the panel members.

The Panel agreed that it would be desirable to include presentations from others outside the BRP if there were any such studies. In that regard, Dr. Ferguson said that she had contacted Chuck Hurley of the National Safety Council (NSC). The Airbag and Seatbelt Safety Campaign has been conducting ongoing public opinion surveys to determine whether the educational message about airbag safety is still getting to the required audience (i.e., how much people know about the dangers of airbags and how to avoid injuries when they deploy). Dr. Ferguson asked if any Panel members had further suggestions for additional presentations. No one had any further ideas.

Dr. Ferguson asked that all draft papers be forwarded to her by March 15, 2004. She also reminded Chip Chidester that he needs to develop updated numbers for the number of cases investigated to date by both the NASS and the Alliance funded PSUs.

The discussion now turned to the logistics for the BRP Public Meeting scheduled for April 14, 2004. Tom Carr said it will be held at the same location as last year, the Reagan Center, Rotunda Room in Washington, D.C. Tom will try to get out detailed directions to the participants, as many of last years attendees had trouble locating the Rotunda Room after arriving at the Reagan Center by Metro.

There was a discussion of attendance and general reaction to last years Public Meeting. Since the feedback appeared to be positive, it was decided to follow the same procedures and augment the invitation list with people who attended last year's meeting. The invitation list will be sent to Panel members who can provide additional names if they see fit. Dr. Ferguson will check to see if the BRP web site can be used again this year to document intended attendance. Dr. Ferguson will draft the letter of invitation and send it out soon. Any additions or corrections to the attendance list should be sent ASAP.

Dr. Schneider noted that he is continuing to work with NASS Zone Center personnel to develop a new format for the monthly summary report. It is expected to be available shortly.

Dr. Ferguson entertained a motion for adjournment. It was so moved and the meeting was adjourned at 5:30 P.M.