

NEWS

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Road Safe America says: Zero tolerance for airline deaths: Why not on highways as well?

ATLANTA – Ongoing news coverage about the grounding of whole fleets of airliners because of maintenance questions reflects a national attitude of zero tolerance for airline crash deaths that the U.S. should adopt for highway deaths as well, declares Stephen C. Owings, founder of Road Safe America.

“More than 42,000 highway deaths a year are equivalent to the number of people who would die if there were some 200 airliner crashes a year, and yet, the national outcry for a solution that would result if planes were going down is absent on the highway death issue,” said Owings. “Is one form of violent death more acceptable than another? This is a national embarrassment.”

While numerous solutions are being discussed to lower the overall highway death toll, Road Safe America has been campaigning for years to have a national regulation adopted requiring speed governors to be set at 68 mph on tractor trailer rigs, an initiative that would cut into the deaths of some 4,000 motorists and 1,000 truck drivers killed each year in wrecks involving the heaviest (over 26,000 pounds) trucks.

“Taking that one step of requiring speed governors to be set at 68 mph on big trucks will have the immediate result of reducing death and suffering on America’s highways,” Owings said. “But for some reason, no national will exists to make highway travel as safe as air travel.”

Road Safe America was founded by Steve and Susan Owings 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.

Road Safe America has a petition pending before the U.S. Department of Transportation to have speed governor activation required on all Class 7 and 8 trucks (over 13 tons in weight) at 68 mph or slower. The non-profit is being supported in the initiative by all national safety advocacy organizations, the American Trucking Associations, and numerous citizens and business executives.

Already, speed limiting governors are required to be set well below 68 mph on heavy trucks in the European Union, Japan, Australia and parts of Canada. Speed limiting devices have been standard equipment on tractor trucks in the US since the 1990s, and many companies and independent truckers use them, but there is no national requirement for all trucks to activate their speed governors.

“When an airliner goes down and 200 people perish, it is national news for days,” Owings said. “But when twice that many are killed every month in crashes involving big trucks, where is the outcry?”

Owings said citizens should contact their Congressmen and Senators, as well as the presidential candidates requesting their support for adoption of Road Safe America’s petition (NHTSA # 26851) now pending before the U.S. Department of Transportation that will require speed governors on all big trucks to be set at 68 miles per hour.

For more information, please visit www.roadsafeamerica.org.
