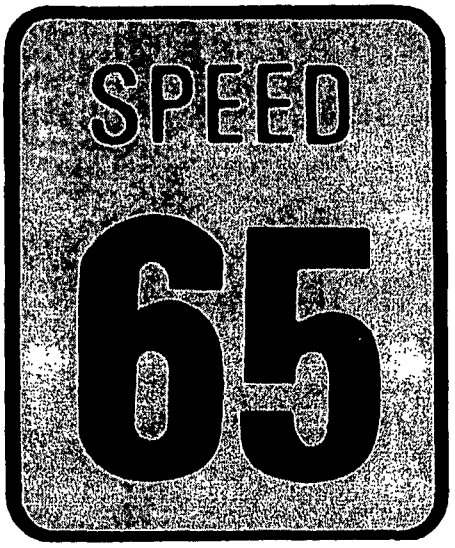
INDUSTRY TRENDS



IS 65 MPH JUST AS SAFE?

Transportation Secretary James Burnley recently reported that raising the speed limit to 65 mph on some rural stretches of interstate highway has had no effect on the traffic death rate.

"We are just not finding any distinction" between the rate of fatalities on the higher-speed highways and on those where the speed limit remains at 55 mph, Burnley explained.

He did however, refuse to give statistics on the effect of the higher speed limit on fatalities, saying those statistics would be included in a report to Congress.

NEW CATEGORY FOR ENGINE OIL

The American Petroleum Institute, the American Society for Testing and Materials and the Society of Automotive Engineers have developed a new service category for engine oils, known as "SG."

The category provides improvement over the current "SF" motor oils in the areas of sludge prevention, oil oxidation and engine wear.

INCENTIVES PLANNED FOR AUDI

Since peaking at sales of 74,061 vehicles in 1985, the Volkswagen owned Audi Company has seen its sales steadily decline. The reasons being the weakness of the dollar and the allegations that the Audi 5000 sedan is plagued by sudden acceleration problems. Also contributing to the sales decline has been the price increase of the 5000 model.

Audi is moving to change that sales decline and has begun offering incentives to buyers, even though officials say the U.S. business will again lose money in 1988. For the long term, Audi's strategy includes replacing the 4000 and 5000 models with redesigned models. Replacing the 4000 series is the 80/90 series and replacing the 5000 is the 100/200 which makes its first appearance later this summer.

Top company officials say 1987 U.S. losses exceeded $120 million. Predictions for 1988 are that sales will be in the neighborhood of 28,000, less than half of Audi's 1986 sales.

MOTORWEEK SELECTS THIRTEEN WINNERS

Thirteen winners were named number one in *Motorweek's* sixth annual "Driver's Choice Awards," a selection of the world's best vehicles in a range of categories.

To pick the winners, *Motorweek's* staff tests between 88 and 100 cars each year. Driving the cars for two weeks, the staff puts an average of 1,250 miles on the vehicles and notes the pros and cons in areas such as acceleration, slow speed handling, braking, mileage and emergency lane change.

The categories and the top choices were as follows:

Best Bargain Car	Volkswagen Fox
Best Small Car	Honda Civic Sedan
Best Station Wagon	Ford Taurus/Mercury Sable
Best Mini-Van	Plymouth Grand Voyager Dodge Grand Caravan
Best Sport Coupe	Ford Thunderbird Turbo
Best 5-Door Hatchback	Merkur Scorpio
Best U.S. 4-Door Sedan	Eagle Premier
Best Imported 4-Door Sedan	Volkswagen Jetta GL
Best Convertible	BMW 325i
Best Luxury	Jaguar XJ6
Best Performance for the Money	Ford Mustang LX
Best Performance	Ferrari Testarossa
Best Multi-Purpose Vehicle	Jeep Cherokee Wagoneer

ROLLOVER CHARGES CONTINUE

For the first time in ten years, Consumers Union, publishers of *Consumers Reports*, announced that it has found a vehicle "not acceptable."

The vehicle is the Suzuki Samarai and the reason cited was that in tests conducted by Consumers Union, the Samarai repeatedly flipped over after making sharp turns at approximately 40 mph. Consumers Union went on to say that the Samarai is so unacceptable that the Suzuki Motor Company should buy back each and every one of the 150,000 models sold in the United States since 1985.

In rebuttal, Suzuki vice president Doug Mazza said, "We have absolute confidence that we are selling a safe and stable vehicle."

However, this is not the first vote of non-confidence for the Samarai. As recently as last February, the Center for Auto Safety called for a vehicle recall, basing its findings on the Samarai's alleged tendency to turn over.

At that time, Suzuki announced that it would conduct its own investigations.