

## Appendix A

# Blaming Consumers for SUV Dangers Is Wrong on the Facts

The Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers has recently highlighted what it calls the “shared responsibility” for safety. But the facts show that it is manufacturers’ shoddy designs, and not consumer misbehavior, that is to blame for the elevated deaths in SUV crashes.

In fact, federal government statistics show that the behavior of SUV drivers is actually slightly better than that of passenger car drivers. SUV occupants have higher levels of seatbelt use, and lower levels of speeding and drinking while driving, than do occupants of passenger cars. Its unclear what more Detroit would have consumers do.

### **SUV occupants are more likely that occupants of passenger cars to wear their seatbelts.**

- In 2002, SUV and van occupants were observed by federal researchers to be wearing their belts 78 percent of the time, a rate slightly higher than the 77 percent of passenger car occupants who were belted.
- The rate at which SUV and van occupant belt use is growing is faster than the rate for passenger cars – between the fall of 1998 and June of 2002, belt use in SUVs and vans increased 11.4 percent while belt use in passenger cars only increased 8.5 percent.

*Source:* National Center Statistics and Analysis, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, *Safety Belt and Helmet Use in 2002 – Overall Results*, Sept. 2002, at 8.

### **SUV drivers are also less likely to speed in a fatal rollover crash.**

- Fifty-three percent of passenger car drivers were speeding when they got into fatal single-vehicle rollover crashes, while 39 percent of SUV drivers were.
- Speed is an important factor in the fatality of rollover crashes. In 2001, nearly three quarters of all fatal rollovers took place where the speed limit was 55 miles per hour or higher. Yet rollover deaths in SUVs remain disastrously high.

*Source:* National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, *Characteristics of Fatal Rollover Crashes*, DOT HS 809 438, April 2002, at 34.

### **SUV drivers are less likely to be drunk when they get involved in a fatal rollover.**

- Drivers of SUVs who were involved in fatal rollover crashes were less likely to have a high positive Blood Alcohol Concentration than were drivers of passenger cars. Overall, 39 percent of passenger car drivers had a 0.10 BAC or more in a fatal rollovers while 27 percent of SUV drivers did.

*Source:* National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, *Characteristics of Fatal Rollover Crashes*, DOT HS 809 438, April 2002, at 37.

