



U.S. Department
of Transportation

**National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration**

1200 New Jersey Avenue SE.
Washington, DC 20590

September 4, 2009

Mr. Sean E. Kane
Safety Research & Strategies, Inc.
340 Anawan Street / Suite 200
Rehoboth, MA 02769

Dear Mr. Kane:

Thank you for your September 2 letter requesting that the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) amend the side impact crash test ratings information posted on the New Car Assessment Program's (NCAP) website, www.safercar.gov, for the 2006-2008 Chevrolet Impala, 2008-2009 Chevrolet Cobalt, and 2008-2009 Buick LaCrosse models to reflect new information arising from an investigation conducted by your company, Safety Research & Strategies, Inc., and the Kansas City Star.

In particular, you stated that it was discovered that General Motors (GM) offered fleet buyers the option to delete "standard" side curtain airbags from the aforementioned models and that GM has since acknowledged this to be true. Additionally, you mentioned that Enterprise Rent-a-Car purchased 66,000 of these models that did not come equipped with side curtain airbags and explained that such vehicles could eventually be purchased through the used car market. Consequently, you requested that the agency amend the related safety information on safercar.gov to ensure that it can uphold its mission to provide accurate safety information to the car-buying public.

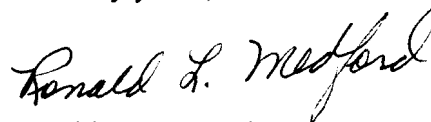
In light of this information, the agency reviewed side airbag data provided by GM for the models in question and found the information provided is misleading. Accordingly, the agency has revised the safercar.gov website to indicate that side curtain airbags are optional equipment for Model Years (MY) 2006-2008 Chevrolet Impalas and MY 2008-2009 Chevrolet Cobalt and Buick LaCrosse models. The agency also amended the crash test ratings information to reflect that the models tested for side impact crash protection were equipped with the optional side curtain airbags. Furthermore, beginning with MY 2011, the agency will begin requesting that vehicle manufacturers specifically state whether fleet models have different safety equipment from those models sold at dealerships. Any differences will be noted in the ratings information provided.



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NHTSA is fully committed to providing consumers with accurate safety information, and we appreciate you bringing this matter to our attention. If you have any additional questions, please contact me or Ms. Jenny Dang, Division Chief for the New Car Assessment Program, at (202) 366-1740.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ronald L. Medford". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped "M" and "D".

Ronald L. Medford
Acting Deputy Administrator