

STATEMENT OF
Cathy Chase, President, Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety
October 17, 2019
Press Conference on the 40th Anniversary of the New Car Assessment Program

Good morning, I am Cathy Chase, President of Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates), a coalition of public health, safety, and consumer organizations, and insurance companies and agents working to advance safer cars, safer drivers and passengers, and safer roads.

Today we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the New Car Assessment Program, known as NCAP, one of the most successful auto safety assessment programs ever created.

I am pleased to welcome a dynamic lineup of distinguished speakers, including: Joan Claybrook, President Emeritus of Public Citizen, who, as head of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (also known as NHTSA), pioneered the effort to create NCAP in the 1970s; David Ward, President and CEO of Global NCAP; and, Jack Gillis, Executive Director of the Consumer Federation of America and author of “The Car Book.” After each speaker has given their remarks, we will open up for questions from the media. All materials, including the speaker statements, handouts and a recording of the webcast will be available on our website, www.SafeRoads.org.

Every day more than 100 people are killed in motor vehicle crashes in the U.S. And every year, millions more are injured. The annual economic and societal price tag, largely borne by taxpayers, exceeds \$800 billion. By any measure motor vehicle crashes are a costly public health epidemic in desperate need of attention, activism and action.

NCAP was created with the goal of reducing this needless carnage by incentivizing auto manufacturers to build safer vehicles and encouraging consumers to buy them. Since the program’s inception, Advocates and our safety allies have successfully fended off attempts to undercut or underfund the program while also supported legislative and regulatory efforts to enhance the program including fighting for “Stars on Cars” in 2005 and providing NHTSA with expert analysis and recommendations on necessary changes.

We are now at a moment in NCAP’s history when its ratings are stuck in the past and in urgent need of upgrading. When families walk into a car dealership, they expect the U.S. government has ensured the safety of motor vehicles. This includes providing adequate information about the vehicles’ performance and reliability. Without action, NCAP’s ratings will amount to little more than a “participation award,” rather than a motivating force toward excellence.

Advanced safety features, such as automatic emergency braking, are not currently part of the U.S. NCAP ratings, despite clear and compelling evidence that these systems save lives. They also form the building blocks of the driverless cars of the future. Auto manufacturers, who are

investing billions of dollars into automated vehicle R&D, should embrace an upgraded U.S. NCAP rating system that will help demonstrate to the public that proven technology delivers safety.

As we mark NCAP's 40th anniversary, we once again call upon members of Congress and NHTSA to take commonsense steps to ensure that its ratings accurately distinguish the very safest cars from the rest. We were pleased to hear NHTSA's announcement yesterday that major changes will be proposed to NCAP in 2020. Actualizing our shared goal of ushering NCAP into the modern age is essential to better protect all road users. To achieve this objective, Advocates has co-authored a report with Joan Claybrook and crafted a proposal that will revitalize U.S. NCAP, allowing the program to assume its former status as the gold standard in the world.

Joan Claybrook is our next speaker and she will give a high level explanation of our specific recommendations.