

February 1982  
Final Report

DOT HS-806-266



U.S. Department  
of Transportation  
**National Highway  
Traffic Safety  
Administration**

# **Development and Test of Motivational Approaches for Increasing Use of Restraints**

---

Sandra D. McNabb  
Richard L. Dueker

Applied Science Associates, Inc.  
Box 158  
Valencia, Pa. 16059

Contract No. DTNH22-81-C-17096  
Contract Amount \$59,751

---

This document is available to the U.S. public through the National Technical Information Service, Springfield, Virginia 22161

This document is disseminated under the sponsorship of the Department of Transportation in the interest of information exchange. The United States Government assumes no liability for its contents or use thereof.

Technical Report Documentation Page

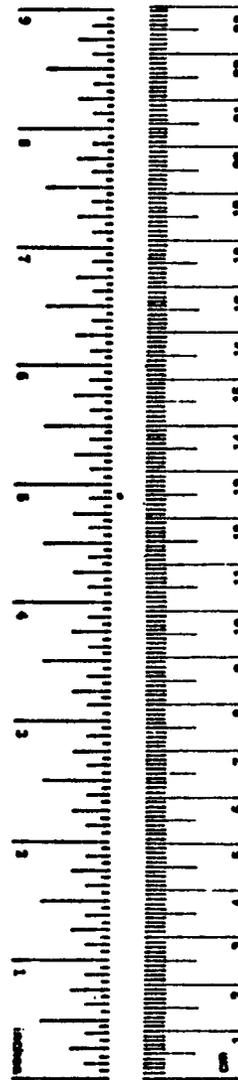
1. Report No. DOT-HS-806 266	2. Government Accession No.	3. Recipient's Catalog No.	
4. Title and Subtitle Development and Test of Motivational Approaches for Increasing Use of Restraints		5. Report Date February 1982	6. Performing Organization Code
7. Author(s) Sandra D. McNabb and Richard L. Dueker		8. Performing Organization Report No. 637	
9. Performing Organization Name and Address Applied Science Associates, Inc. Box 158 Valencia, PA 16059		10. Work Unit No. (TRAI5)	11. Contract or Grant No. DTNH22-81-C-17096
12. Sponsoring Agency Name and Address U.S. Department of Transportation National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Washington, DC 20590		13. Type of Report and Period Covered Final Report December 1980 - February 1982	
15. Supplementary Notes		14. Sponsoring Agency Code NHTSA/NRD-40	
16. Abstract A pilot program to persuade automobile dealers and salespeople to promote safety belts at the point-of-sale was developed and tested. The pilot program included key messages: encouraging the use of safety belts shows concern for the customer's well-being. This concern can translate into an increase in referral and repeat business, and an improvement in the image of the dealership. These messages were presented to the dealers and salespeople at a conference. Included as part of the conference was a videotape showing salespeople how to integrate safety belt information in sales presentations and a handbook on occupant restraint systems with tips on how to promote them to customers. Two additional sales training meetings were held to present the safety belt information directly to salespeople. The pilot program was well-received by the dealers and salespeople. They agreed that promoting safety belt usage shows concern for the customer. Salespeople did discuss safety belts with some of their customers, and some customers reported an increase in safety belt usage.			
17. Key Words Safety Belts Automobile Dealers Child Restraints Motivational Approaches		18. Distribution Statement Document is available to the U.S. public through the National Technical Information Service, Springfield, VA 22161	
19. Security Classif. (of this report) Unclassified	20. Security Classif. (of this page) Unclassified	21. No. of Pages 49	22. Price

## METRIC CONVERSION FACTORS

### Approximate Conversions to Metric Measures

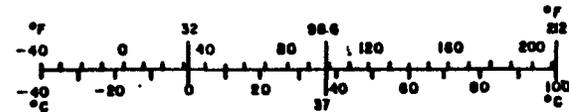
Symbol	When You Know	Multiply by	To Find	Symbol
<b>LENGTH</b>				
in	inches	2.5	centimeters	cm
ft	feet	30	centimeters	cm
yd	yards	0.9	meters	m
mi	miles	1.6	kilometers	km
<b>AREA</b>				
in <sup>2</sup>	square inches	6.5	square centimeters	cm <sup>2</sup>
ft <sup>2</sup>	square feet	0.09	square meters	m <sup>2</sup>
yd <sup>2</sup>	square yards	0.8	square meters	m <sup>2</sup>
mi <sup>2</sup>	square miles	2.6	square kilometers	km <sup>2</sup>
acres	acres	0.4	hectares	ha
<b>MASS (weight)</b>				
oz	ounces	28	grams	g
lb	pounds	0.45	kilograms	kg
	short tons (2000 lb)	0.9	tonnes	t
<b>VOLUME</b>				
teaspoon	teaspoons	5	milliliters	ml
Tablespoon	tablespoons	15	milliliters	ml
fl oz	fluid ounces	30	milliliters	ml
c	cups	0.24	liters	l
pt	pints	0.47	liters	l
qt	quarts	0.95	liters	l
gal	gallons	3.8	liters	l
ft <sup>3</sup>	cubic feet	0.03	cubic meters	m <sup>3</sup>
yd <sup>3</sup>	cubic yards	0.76	cubic meters	m <sup>3</sup>
<b>TEMPERATURE (exact)</b>				
°F	Fahrenheit temperature	5/9 (after subtracting 32)	Celsius temperature	°C

\* 1 in = 2.54 (exactly). For other exact conversions and more detailed tables, see NBS Misc. Publ. 260, Units of Weights and Measures, Price \$2.25, SD Catalog No. C13.10-260.



### Approximate Conversions from Metric Measures

Symbol	When You Know	Multiply by	To Find	Symbol
<b>LENGTH</b>				
mm	millimeters	0.04	inches	in
cm	centimeters	0.4	inches	in
m	meters	3.3	feet	ft
m	meters	1.1	yards	yd
km	kilometers	0.6	miles	mi
<b>AREA</b>				
cm <sup>2</sup>	square centimeters	0.16	square inches	in <sup>2</sup>
m <sup>2</sup>	square meters	1.2	square yards	yd <sup>2</sup>
ha	square kilometers	0.4	square miles	mi <sup>2</sup>
ha	hectares (10,000 m <sup>2</sup> )	2.5	acres	acres
<b>MASS (weight)</b>				
g	grams	0.035	ounces	oz
kg	kilograms	2.2	pounds	lb
t	tonnes (1000 kg)	1.1	short tons	short tons
<b>VOLUME</b>				
ml	milliliters	0.03	fluid ounces	fl oz
l	liters	2.1	pints	pt
l	liters	1.06	quarts	qt
l	liters	0.26	gallons	gal
m <sup>3</sup>	cubic meters	35	cubic feet	ft <sup>3</sup>
m <sup>3</sup>	cubic meters	1.3	cubic yards	yd <sup>3</sup>
<b>TEMPERATURE (exact)</b>				
°C	Celsius temperature	9/5 (then add 32)	Fahrenheit temperature	°F



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The contents of this report reflect the views of Applied Science Associates, Inc. (ASA), which is responsible for the accuracy of the data presented here. The contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the official view or policy of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation.

We would like to thank Lori W. Chiplock of ASA for producing the videotapes for this project. We also want to thank Drs. Bruce E. Bigelow (Contract Technical Manager) and P. Robert Knaff for their contributions to the successful completion of this project.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
<b>SECTION 1. SELLING SAFETY BELTS AT THE POINT OF SALE . . . . .</b>	1-1
Introduction . . . . .	1-1
Overview . . . . .	1-4
<b>SECTION 2. DEVELOPMENT OF AUTOMOBILE DEALERSHIP SAFETY BELT PROGRAM . . . . .</b>	2-1
Dealership Safety Belt Programs . . . . .	2-1
Donaldson Motor Company . . . . .	2-1
Marv Hartwig, Inc. . . . .	2-1
Don Beyer Motors, Inc. . . . .	2-2
Sales Training . . . . .	2-3
Application of Materials Evaluation/ Development (MED) System . . . . .	2-4
Overview of MED System . . . . .	2-4
How the Message is Conveyed . . . . .	2-6
Positioning . . . . .	2-6
Execution . . . . .	2-7
How the Message is Stated . . . . .	2-8
Source Qualities . . . . .	2-8
Message Qualities . . . . .	2-9
Argument Techniques . . . . .	2-9
What the Message Contains . . . . .	2-9
What/How to Do It . . . . .	2-10
Why Do It . . . . .	2-10
When/Where to Do It . . . . .	2-10
Conclusions . . . . .	2-11
<b>SECTION 3. PRESENTATION OF SAFETY BELT PROGRAM: "AUTOMOTIVE RESTRAINT SYSTEMS: A SALES-PLUS FACTOR . . . . .</b>	3-1
Automobile Dealership Safety Belt Program . . . . .	3-1
Conference Format . . . . .	3-1
Videotape . . . . .	3-2
Handbook on Occupant Restraint System Features . . . . .	3-3
Presentation of Conference . . . . .	3-4
Sales Training Meetings . . . . .	3-7

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

SECTION 4.	EVALUATION OF AUTOMOBILE DEALERSHIP SAFETY BELT PROGRAM . . . . .	4-1
	Impact of Program on Automobile Dealers and Salespeople . . . . .	4-1
	Post-Conference Evaluation . . . . .	4-1
	Conference Format . . . . .	4-1
	Safety Belt Message . . . . .	4-2
	Follow-Up Evaluations . . . . .	4-3
	Sales Training Meetings . . . . .	4-4
	Impact of Program on New Car Buyers . . . . .	4-5
SECTION 5.	CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS . . . . .	5-1
	Feasibility of Promoting Safety Belt Usage at Point-of-Sale . . . . .	5-1
	Recommended Improvements to the Program . . . . .	5-1
	Support for the Program . . . . .	5-2
	Format of the Program . . . . .	5-2
	Content of the Program . . . . .	5-3
	Summary . . . . .	5-3
APPENDIX A.	MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT FOR AUTOMATIC RESTRAINT SYSTEMS . . . . .	A-1
REFERENCES . . . . .		R-1

## LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
3-1	Attendees at Pilot Presentation . . . . .	3-5
3-2	Agenda--"Automotive Restraint Systems: A Sales-Plus Factor" 22 July 1981 . . . . .	3-6
4-1	Agreement with Safety Belt Messages . . . . .	4-2
4-2	Agreement with Safety Belt Messages . . . . .	4-5
4-3	Summary of Safety Belt Information Provided to New Car Customers . . . . .	4-10
4-4	Summary of Frequency of Safety Belt Use for Informed and Non-Informed Customers . . . . .	4-10

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1-1	Automobile Dealership Program . . . . .	1-3
2-1	Hierarchical Relationships Between Evaluation Criteria . . . . .	2-5

## SECTION 1

### SELLING SAFETY BELTS AT THE POINT OF SALE

#### Introduction

Over the past decade, a number of programs have been developed to encourage the usage of safety belts and other occupant-restraint devices in automobiles. The overall effect of these programs has been disappointing. At the present time, only 11 percent of the driving population uses safety belts.

In an effort to overcome these low usage rates, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) sought other, more innovative, approaches to promote safety belt usage. The purpose of the present research effort was to explore the feasibility of promoting safety belt usage at the point of sale of the automobile. Previous safety belt programs have been promoted by civic groups, physicians, employers, police and other such groups. No safety belt program had focused on the group most associated with automobiles--the automobile salesperson.

Promoting safety belt usage at the point of sale can be effective for a number of reasons:

1. First of all, the car salesperson is perceived to be an expert on automobiles. He/she makes a living knowing about and selling automobiles. If the salesperson claims that it is a good idea to wear safety belts, then there is no reason for the person to doubt the message.
2. Secondly, the safety belt message is presented to the customer at the point of time which he is able to act on the message. One of the problems with public service announcements is that they are heard when the person is sitting in the living room, not in the automobile. At the dealership, the customer hears the message, sees the safety belt, and can make the decision to put it on.
3. Finally, with a new car, the perception of risk is enhanced. When the car buyer sits in his/her new car for the first time, they are very aware of the possibility of accidents--in not wanting to scratch or dent their new car. This same perception of risk can be transferred to the effects of an accident on their own bodies.

A second advantage of the point-of-sale approach is with the size of the selling network. There are more than 26,000 automobile dealers and

147,000 sales people in the United States. More than 9,000,000 cars are sold annually. Considering the number of drivers who enter the dealer showroom every day, the potential impact of this program is tremendous.

The primary goal of this project was to develop and test a prototype message format that could be used to persuade automobile dealers and sales people to promote safety belt usage at the point of sale. The secondary goal was to develop specific safety belt messages which could be used by the sales people to encourage new car buyers to wear safety belts. These two goals have two distinct target audiences:

1. Automobile dealers and salespeople, and
2. New car buyers.

The third goal of this project was to develop recommendations for changes in the program. In developing this program, it was important to keep in mind that messages used to persuade automobile dealers and sales people to promote safety belts are distinct from messages used by salespeople to persuade buyers to use safety belts. This approach to the separate target audiences is illustrated in Figure 1-1. The messages to persuade the automobile dealers and salespeople to promote safety belts include:

1. Customers are interested in safety features.
2. Encouraging safety belt usage shows concern for the customer.
3. Encouraging safety belt usage is good for the image of the dealership.
4. Encouraging safety belt usage can increase repeat and referral business.

A successful point-of-sale program must not only convince dealers and salespeople of the benefits of promoting safety belt usage, it must also demonstrate how safety belts can be promoted at the three key stages of automobile selling:

1. Product presentation.
2. Test drive.
3. Delivery.

The point-of-sale program must provide the salesperson with a way of integrating the safety belt themes and messages into the normal sales presentation. These safety belt messages to the buyer include:

1. Comfort and convenience of today's safety belts.
2. Safety belts keep the driver in control of the car in case of an accident.

# AUTOMOBILE DEALERSHIP PROGRAM

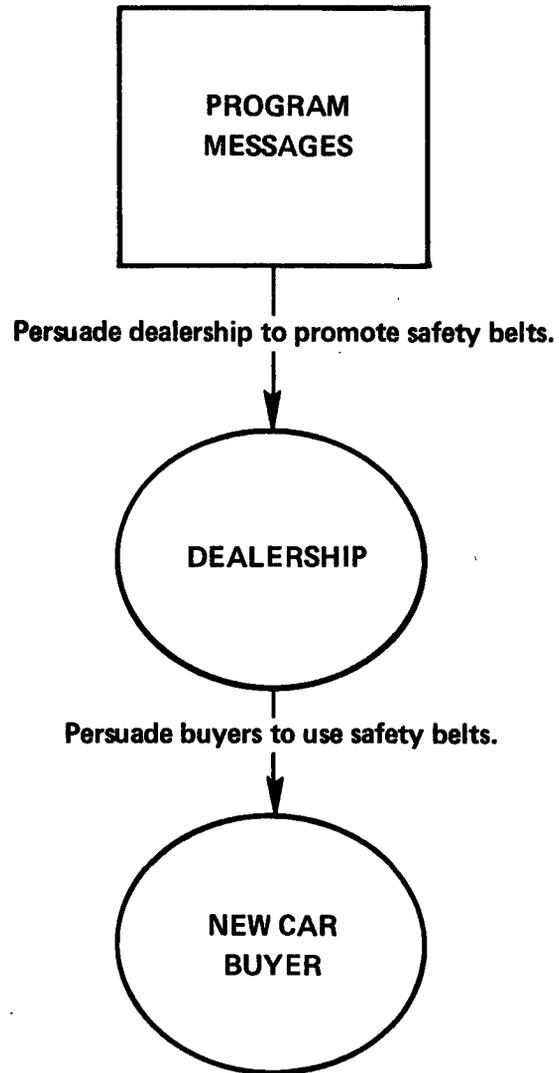


Figure 1-1. Automobile Dealership Program

3. Vehicle-sensitive inertia reels are effective.
4. Child safety seats should be used for young children.

### Overview

The project began with an emphasis on the promotion of automatic belt systems. At the beginning of the project (December 1980), the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (FMVSS) No. 208, Occupant Crash Protection, requiring automatic restraint protection in new cars, was still in effect. At that point, the purpose of the project was to develop approaches by which automobile dealers and salespeople become advocates of the automatic belt systems. As the future of FMVSS No. 208 became less certain, the project emphasis was shifted toward the promotion of manual belt systems. However, since automatic belt systems may some day appear on new cars, materials were developed to help salespeople promote these systems also. All materials were developed in a modular fashion, so that they could be inserted into a workshop structure when needed. Development of messages and materials for automatic belt systems is documented in Appendix A. The rest of this report will concentrate on manual belt systems.

The project was divided into three major phases:

1. Development of automobile dealership program.
2. Presentation of safety belt program.
3. Evaluation of the safety belt program.

Each of these efforts is described in the sections which follow.

## SECTION 2

### DEVELOPMENT OF AUTOMOBILE DEALERSHIP SAFETY BELT PROGRAM

The purpose of this section is to document the development of the automobile dealership safety belt program. A number of activities were involved in developing the program. These activities included:

1. Reviewing approaches used by dealers to promote safety belts.
2. Examining the training of salespeople to determine which messages would persuade them to promote safety belts.
3. Applying the Materials Evaluation/Development (MED) system to systematically determine the contents of the program.

Each of these activities will be described in detail.

#### Selling Safety to a Salesperson A Review of Approaches

If safety belts are to be promoted at the point of sale, then automobile dealers and salespeople will have to be sold the idea first. The purpose of this section is to review programs or policies that dealerships have used to promote safety belts. A second purpose of this section is to review how salespeople are trained so that a safety belt promotion program can be incorporated into the sales presentation.

#### Dealership Safety Belt Programs

Safety campaigns for automobile dealers usually take the form of donating automobiles to the local high school for driver education courses. Very few dealerships are involved in safety belt programs. Three dealerships were identified who had some type of safety belt program. These dealers were contacted and details about their programs were determined.

Donaldson Motor Company

Donaldson Motor Company is a Ford-Mercury dealership in Weslaco, Texas. It is a small dealership, selling about 350 cars per year. Mr. Dave Donaldson, the dealer, was recently cited by the Dealers Safety and Mobility Council for his safety program. At Donaldson Motor Company, salespeople demonstrate all safety equipment when the car is delivered to the customer. This demonstration includes safety belts. The salesperson:

- . Demonstrates how to buckle and unbuckle belts.
- . Asks the customer to wear them every time they drive.

Marv Hartwig, Inc.

Marvin Hartwig is a Lincoln-Mercury and Datsun dealer in Iowa City, Iowa. He is also the chairman of the Dealers Safety and Mobility Council. There is no formal safety belt program at this dealership, but the sales people:

- . Wear safety belts during test drives.
- . Ask customers to wear safety belts during the test drive.

Don Beyer Motors, Inc.

Don Beyer Motors, Inc. is a Volvo dealership in Falls Church, Virginia. Don Beyer, Jr. is active in promoting safety in automobiles. This promotion includes:

- . Safety belts in newspaper advertisements.
- . Child safety seat display in showroom.
- . Safety belt pamphlets are included in the title package of every new car delivered to the customer.
- . Newsletters to Volvo customers containing information about safety belts and child safety seats.

### Summary of Dealership Programs

Even with this small sample of dealership programs, it is possible to identify several places where safety belts can be promoted during the sales presentation:

1. Dealership advertising.
2. Demonstration drives.
3. Delivery of car to customer.

None of the dealers promoted safety belts during the first stage of selling--product presentation, where the salesperson describes the features of the automobile. In order to learn more about how to promote safety belts during this stage, it is necessary to know what salespeople are trained to present during their product presentations.

### Sales Training

All of the automobile manufacturers conduct training sessions for their salespeople. A General Motors training session was visited to learn first-hand how to motivate salespeople to sell their product. The motivation techniques derived from the sales training could then be applied to persuade salespeople to promote safety belts.

A key aspect of the sales training program was to "Sell yourself to the customer first." In a recent GM survey,<sup>1</sup> salespeople across the nation were asked "Why do you think a customer does not buy from a salesman?" Many of the sales people assumed that price would be the number one reason. The actual results indicate the lack of concern for the customer was the reason selected most often. Fifty-four percent of the salespeople surveyed selected "lack of concern for the customer." Lack of product knowledge was the second most frequently selected reason, and was chosen by 48 percent of the salespeople.

Automobiles can be sold in a number of different ways, but the key to the sale is to "Sell yourself to the customer first." Then, armed with product knowledge, the salesperson can make the sale.

---

<sup>1</sup>Personal communication, Jack Kearns.

## Application of Materials Evaluation/ Development (MED) System

A key aspect of this project was the development of materials that could be used to persuade automobile dealers and salespeople to promote safety belts. The Materials Evaluation/Development (MED) system, developed by ASA, was used to guide the materials development phase. The ASA MED system is described in detail in an ASA paper entitled, "Can Safety Behaviors be Changed?" (Blatt, 1979). This paper laid the theoretical groundwork for the qualitative aspects of the MED system. An overview of the MED system and its application to this safety belt program is described in this section.

### Overview of MED System

The MED system provides a systematic quantitative method for the evaluation/development of safety materials/campaigns. The system builds upon, and integrates, the wide-range of disciplines involved in development of materials designed to change attitudes/behavior. Specifically, the system is grounded in concepts and theories adapted from the following areas:

- . Theories of attitude and behavior change.
- . Advertising practice.
- . Mass communication principles.
- . System analysis and value engineering.

In the past, the MED system has been used to evaluate public service announcements (PSAs) for various safety campaigns, most notably motorcycle helmet usage. The methodology can be modified to be used to develop and evaluate a safety belt campaign or program. There are three critical dimensions of the MED system:

1. How the message is conveyed.
2. How the message is stated.
3. What the message contains.

These dimensions and their subdivisions are illustrated in Figure 2-1.

The first dimension evaluates a safety belt program in terms of procedures generally used by the advertising industry. This includes a complete definition of the target audience, a determination of whether the "product personality" is appropriate for the target audience, and the adequacy of the media choice for delivering the message. These elements were derived from the literature review of advertising practices.

# MATERIALS EVALUATION AND DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

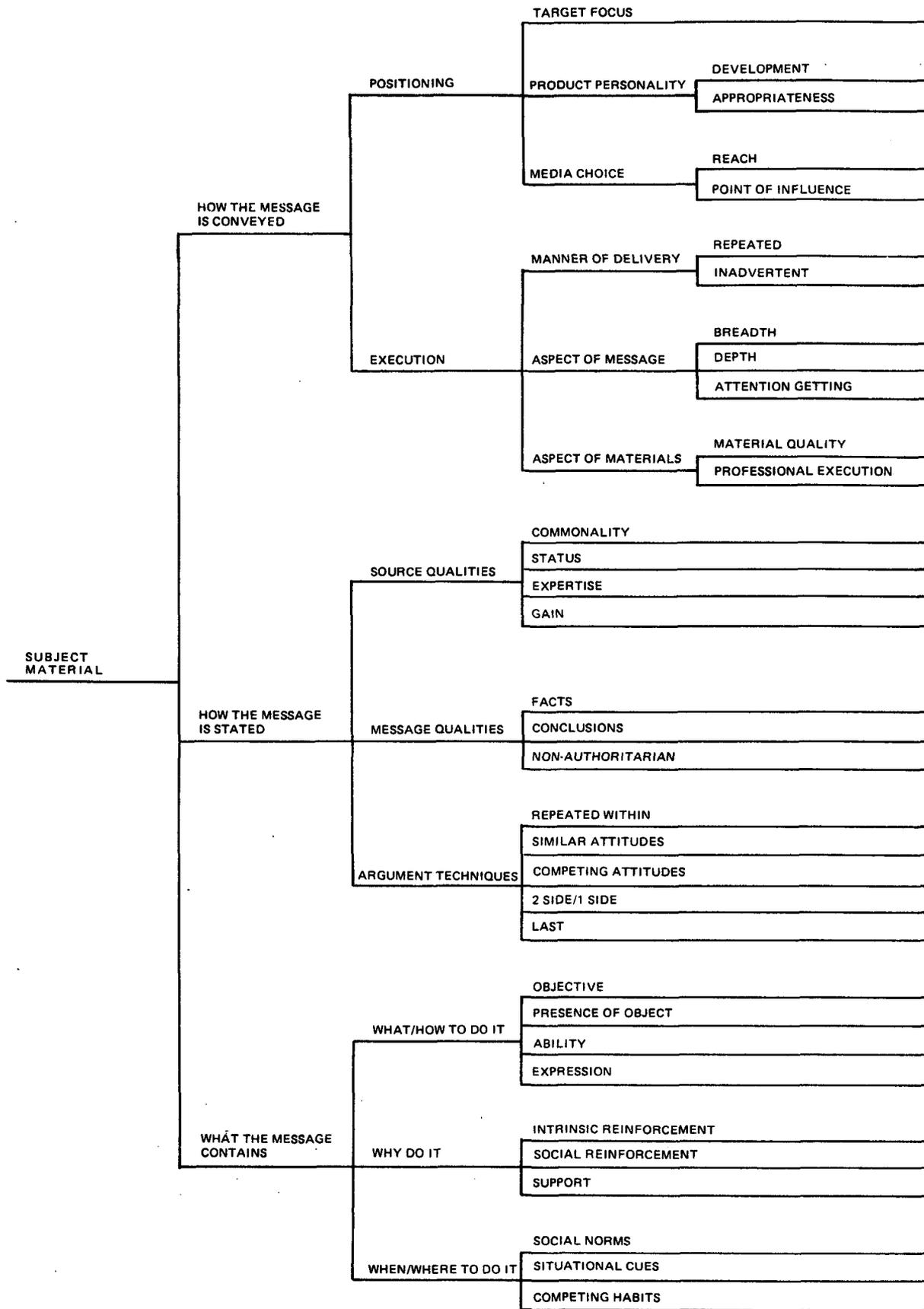


Figure 2-1. Hierarchical Relationships Between Evaluation Criteria

The second dimension evaluates how well the messages in a safety belt program adhere to the principles of attitude/behavior change, as applied to the area of mass communications. This includes a review of the argument techniques used to present the message to the target audience, the tone or character of the message, and the characteristics of the source of the message.

The third dimension evaluates the degree to which the program includes information designed to demonstrate the desired safety behaviors. The program should provide the proper context in which the target audience can perform the safety behaviors. Also, the program should make the target audience aware of the reasons and benefits of these safety behaviors.

### How the Message Is Conveyed

The first dimension of the MED system is concerned with how the message is conveyed. There are two subsets of this dimension--Positioning and Execution. These subsets and the criteria for each are discussed below.

#### Positioning

Effective advertising requires that the product have the correct target focus and given a "personality," that appeals to the target audience. In addition, the media choice for disseminating the information should be appropriate to the product and the target audience.

As stated in the introduction, there are two target audiences in this program--automobile dealers and salespeople and new car buyers. For automobile salespeople, a safety belt program that helped sell cars would have good target focus. In contrast, the messages to the new car buyer would focus on issues of importance to buyers, such as security and protection, comfort, convenience and ease of use.

A well-developed product personality makes it easier to position the product relative to the audience. Safety belts and safety belt usage do have a well-developed image, but it is primarily negative (Hart, 1978):

- . Safe
- . Inconvenient
- . Uncomfortable
- . Hard-to-use.

Other than safety, none of these characteristics is appropriate for the present safety belt program. Safety belts cannot be sold to either salespeople or new car buyers if they keep this negative image.

A successful safety belt program for automobile dealers and salespeople must develop a new, positive personality for safety belts. This image should reinforce the well-developed safety characteristic, and show

how recent design changes have eliminated many of the negative characteristics. For example, the tension-relief mechanism on many safety belt models take the pressure of the belt off the neck and shoulder. This feature makes belts more comfortable. In addition, vehicle-sensitive inertia reels allow upper body movement and still provide protection in a crash.

The appropriate safety belt personality for this program projects an image of:

- . Safety
- . Security
- . Comfort
- . Convenience
- . Ease of Use.

In order for a program to be effective, its message must reach the target audience. The most efficient way to reach the automobile dealers and salespeople is through a formal program designed to present the safety belt information and the benefits of promoting usage at the dealership. Other means of reaching this audience, such as PSAs, civic groups, etc., are less likely to have impact.

For new buyers, the dealer and salesperson will promote safety belt usage at the dealership. As discussed in the introduction, most safety belt campaigns have relied on PSAs to present the message to the audience. Presenting the message at the dealership increases the chances that the message will reach the buyer. In buying a new car, the buyer is attentive to the salesperson, and the information disseminated by the salesperson is likely to have greater impact.

A second advantage of the automobile dealership program is that the message is reaching the buyer at the point of influence--the point in time at which the buyer can choose to wear the safety belt. A disadvantage of TV PSAs is that they are shown while the audience is in the living room, not in the automobile. At the dealership, the message is reaching the audience when an automobile is available so that the message can have immediate impact.

### Execution

This subdivision concerns itself with the qualities of the message and the manner in which it is conveyed.

In order to persuade automobile personnel that promoting safety belts shows concern for the customer and can help close a sale, this message must be repeated several times throughout the program. This message must be reflected in what the conference leader says, what the audiovisuals portray, and the written materials present.

In order to increase wearing rates, safety belt messages must be repeated several times to the new car buyer. In the automobile dealership, the message can be repeated at several stages of the sales presentation:

1. Product presentation
2. Test drive
3. Delivery of car to buyer.

Safety belt messages should be incorporated into each stage of this presentation so that the buyer has several opportunities to encounter the message.

Messages which blatantly attempt to change attitudes typically are less successful than inadvertent messages. All things being equal, it is preferable for the buyer to feel that wearing a safety belt was a voluntary choice. If safety belt information is included as part of a thorough presentation of the automobile's features, then the buyer should not perceive the information as a blatant attempt to change his/her wearing behavior.

The automobile dealership can provide details about safety belts that could not attract the attention of the buyer outside the dealership. For example, the salesperson can explain the details of the tension-relief mechanism or the vehicle-sensitive inertia reel during the product presentation stage of selling.

#### How the Message is Stated

Within the general dimension of "How the Message is Stated," three subtopics were defined: Source Qualities, Message Qualities, and Argument Techniques.

#### Source Qualities

The characteristics of the individual delivering the message can make the difference between whether the message is accepted or rejected. In the case of the automobile dealers and salespeople, only a person with a great deal of experience in the automobile industry with no financial interest in promoting safety belts would have the necessary credibility. If the conference is to be successful in persuading salespeople that promoting safety belts can help them sell cars, this message must be delivered by someone from the "inside."

The automobile salesperson already has the necessary credentials to deliver the message to the buyer. The salesperson is perceived to be an expert on automobiles. There is no financial interest in promoting safety belts, per se, only automobiles. Therefore, what the salesperson says about safety belts and using safety belts must be taken seriously.

### Message Qualities

Information about safety belts can be transmitted in several ways, and the tone or character of that information can influence the impact on the target audience.

In order to persuade salespeople that promoting safety belts will benefit their sales, they need facts and conclusions. They need facts that showing concern for the customer can lead to increased sales. They need facts that customers are indeed interested in safety features. The tone of the information presented to salespeople must be factual and state conclusions drawn from the facts.

For new car buyers, the tone of the information can vary somewhat. For example, typically authoritarian messages, "Wear your safety belt, it could save your life," are rejected. However, since the message is coming from a perceived authority on automobiles, these authoritarian messages have a better chance at acceptance. New car buyers also need facts and conclusions about safety belt usage, but these facts can be more effectively combined with direct requests to wear safety belts.

### Argument Techniques

A number of different argument techniques have been found to be effective in changing attitudes. These argument techniques should be used in developing the materials for both salespeople and the new car buyer.

First of all, the primary message should be repeated several times throughout the materials. If the message is important, it should be said more than once.

More attitude change can be expected if the source begins by stating attitudes which are similar to the target group. In talking with salespeople, the source should begin with skepticism toward safety belts and their importance. When the salesperson is talking with the buyer, the salesperson could mention how uncomfortable the old safety belts used to be.

The messages to the salespeople and new car buyers will contain attitudes which are different from, and compete with, the attitudes they currently hold. The program should contain a means of restoring cognitive balance. For example, when buyers protest that wearing safety belts could cause them to be trapped in a burning car, the salesperson must overcome this attitude by explaining how rare these accidents are and how the driver needs to retain control in these situations.

### What the Message Contains

Within the general dimension of message content, there are three subdivisions of What/How to Do It, Why Do It, and When/Where to Do It.

### What/How to Do It

Once the safety belt messages have reached the audiences and they are persuaded to either promote safety belts or wear them, the program must be specific as to how to do it.

In the case of the automobile salespeople, if the thrust of the message is to ask the customer to wear a safety belt during the test drive, he/she should be shown how to ask. If the salesperson is to present the features of safety belts during product presentation, a sample sales presentation which includes this message is needed. One cannot assume that salespeople already know how to incorporate this information into the presentation.

Likewise, for new car buyers, it is not enough to assume that they know how to don the safety belt. Many people still wear them incorrectly, and it is the salesperson's responsibility to correctly demonstrate the wearing of safety belts.

### Why Do It

The materials should provide the reasons for, and the benefits of, promoting safety belts and wearing them.

In most cases, there is intrinsic reinforcement in promoting safety belts--another car sold, and the possibility of repeat and referral business. All of these are clear reasons for, and benefits of, promoting safety belts. For safety belt users, the intrinsic reinforcement lies in the reduction of injuries in the case of an accident.

For the automobile salesperson, there is also social reinforcement for promoting safety belts. Social reinforcement can come in the form of goodwill for the dealership, or responsibility for the safety of others.

Finally, the materials should provide convincing evidence as to why the target audiences should believe that the behavior has these benefits.

### When/Where to Do It

Salespeople should be provided with the proper content in which to promote safety belts. Social context is critical to the success of any program of this type. There should be support for the program among all of the salespeople, so that peer pressure for promoting safety belts can develop.

Secondly, salespeople should be shown how to capitalize on all opportunities to promote safety belts at the dealership. The salesperson should distribute safety belt pamphlets to the buyer when the sales agreement is being approved by the sales manager.

## Conclusions

This review of dealership safety belt programs and the MED system approach to developing a safety belt program provided direction to the development of materials.

- . A formal conference-type format was needed to present the information to the automobile dealers and salespeople.
- . The leader had to have automobile experience in order to establish his/her credibility with the audience.
- . A videotaped sales presentation should be shown to demonstrate how safety belt information can be presented to the buyer.
- . Factual information about the mechanics and use of safety belts is needed.
- . The benefits to the dealership for promoting safety belts must be clearly stated.

The specifics of the program and materials will be discussed in the next section.

### SECTION 3

#### PRESENTATION OF SAFETY BELT PROGRAM: "AUTOMOTIVE RESTRAINT SYSTEMS: A SALES-PLUS FACTOR"

The purpose of this section is to describe the automobile dealership program and how it was presented to the dealers and salespeople.

#### Automobile Dealership Safety Belt Program

The automobile dealership safety belt program consisted of several components:

1. Formal conference to present safety belt messages and information to automobile dealers and salespeople.
2. Videotape of sample sales presentations incorporating safety belt information.
3. Handbook on Occupant Restraint System Features.
4. Sales training meetings held in the dealership.

#### Conference Format

When new product information is introduced to dealers and salespeople, they are often called in to attend a conference. At these conferences, the new product is demonstrated, or described, and a pep talk is given to motivate the salespeople to sell it to their customers. For these reasons, the safety belt information was presented to the dealers and salespeople in a conference-type format.

In discussing the MED system approach to program development, one subdivision that was critical to the success of the program was source qualities, or characteristics of the individual delivering a message. In that subdivision, it was clear that the conference leader needed a solid background in the automobile industry and have no financial interest in promoting safety belts.

Mr. Jack Kearns was chosen as the conference leader because of his years of experience in training GM salespeople, and his other automobile industry experience, including:

1. Thirty-five years with the automotive industry.
2. Owned his own dealership.
3. Served on GM Marketing Advisory Council.
4. Member of Marketing Staff for Dealer Marketing and Development.
5. Part of the GM Speakers Bureau.

Jack Kearns' years of automobile experience gave the safety belt program credibility it could not have gained otherwise.

### Videotape

A videotape, "The Occupant Restraint System: A Sales-Plus Factor," was made to show salespeople how the safety belt information can be incorporated into the sales presentation. Salespeople need to see how to talk with customers about safety belts at the three stages of the sales presentation:

1. Product presentation.
2. Test drive.
3. Delivery of car to customer.

During product presentation, safety belt features can be included as part of a thorough presentation of the automobile. In the videotape, the salesman pointed out the following features to his customer:

1. Standard safety features such as padded dash, collapsible steering column.
2. Safety belts were built with an inertia reel that only locked up when there was a sudden stop.
3. Safety belts should be worn low on the hips without too much slack.

As the salesman made these points, he asked the customer to "Try them on for size."

The test drive provides another opportunity to promote safety belts. During the test drive, the salesman served as a model to the customer. He wore his safety belt and encouraged the customer to wear it also. The salesman can adjust the belt for the customer so that the customer perceives it as comfortable and convenient. The test drive can be the beginning of a safety belt habit.

The last time that the salesperson has to promote safety belts is during the delivery of the car. In the videotape, the salesman gave his customer several safety belt pamphlets, along with the Owner's Manual and the keys to the new car. Salespeople were encourage to call their customers in about a week to see how the customer liked the new car and whether he has read the safety belt materials.

The videotape also demonstrated how child safety seats could be promoted. A young couple was shown with their infant. The salesman came out with an infant seat for the child. He installed the seat for the parents and took the whole family for a test drive. The salesman emphasized the importance of having child restraints available for test drives.

The videotape closed with presenting some tips for the concerned sales professional:

1. Wear safety belts yourself.
2. Have pamphlets on belts and child seats available at the showroom.
3. Demonstrate the features of the safety belts to the customer.
4. Have your customers buckle up on test drives.
5. Learn how to use child safety seats.
6. Use child safety seats on test drives with small children.

#### Handbook on Occupant Restraint System Features

For salespeople to communicate the important features of safety belts and child safety seats to their customers, they must first learn about these features themselves. A handbook describing the mechanics of the different restraint systems and their selling features was developed. This handbook was based on the Product Portfolio used by GM to explain to salespeople the mechanics and selling features of brakes, power steering, transmissions, etc.

The following topics were included in the handbook on occupant restraints:

- . Function of Occupant Restraint Systems.
- . Vehicle-Sensitive Inertia Reels.

- . Lap-Shoulder Belts.
- . Lap Belts.
- . Child Restraints for Infants.
- . Child Restraints for Toddlers.
- . Automatic Restraint Systems.

For each of these topics the handbook provided:

1. Basic description of restraint.
2. Selling features of restraint.
3. Illustration of use of restraint.
4. Tips for safe and effective use/installation.

#### Presentation of Conference

Selected automobile dealers and salespeople in the Pittsburgh area were invited to attend the conference--"Automotive Restraint Systems: A Sales-Plus Factor." The dealerships represented both domestic and foreign manufacturers and were selected on the basis of influence of the dealer, size of dealership, or prior interest in safety. For example, Mr. Paul Bendik is the President of the Pittsburgh Automotive Trade Association, Mr. William Baierl and Mr. Jerry Spear represent two of the largest dealerships in Western Pennsylvania, and Mr. Tony Johns is the Chairman of the Safety Committee for the Pennsylvania Automobile Dealers Association. Both the dealers and a salesperson from the dealership were invited to attend the conference. Table 3-1 lists the attendees for the conference.

The conference was held on 22 July 1981, in a centrally-located hotel with conference facilities. The dealers or sales managers met in the morning, while the salespeople met in the afternoon. Lunch was provided for everyone attending the conference. Table 3-2 lists the topics and schedule for the conferences.

Each participant received a conference package which included the following items:

- . Handbook on Occupant Restraint System Features.
- . "Specialist in Occupant Restraint Systems" Certificate.
- . Customer Safety Belt Pamphlets.
  - "How Many of These Fairy Tales Have You Told?"
  - "Buckle Up Baby"
  - "Snap It Up"

Table 3-1

Attendees at Pilot Presentation

Mr. Paul Bendik  
Bendik Oldsmobile

Mr. Richard Yoder  
Yoder Pontiac-Oldsmobile, Inc.

Mr. Richard Harris  
Bendik Oldsmobile

Mr. Ed Fair  
North Hills Volkswagen

Mr. William Baierl  
Baierl Chevrolet-Honda

Mr. Tony Johns  
Butler County Ford

Mr. Keith Knoch  
Baierl Chevrolet-Honda

Mr. Joseph Lombard  
Lombard Motors (Saab)

Mr. Jerry Spear  
Spear Chevrolet

Mr. John Crall  
Lombard Motors (Saab)

Mr. John Bragle  
Spear Chevrolet

NHTSA Representatives

ASA Staff

Mr. Rick Smith  
Dr. Bruce Bigelow

Dr. Sandra McNabb  
Mr. Richard L. Dueker

Table 3-2

Agenda--"Automotive Restraint Systems: A Sales-Plus Factor"  
22 July 1981

	<u>Time</u>
INTRODUCTION	
Participants introduce themselves, the cars they sell, how long they have been car dealers (salespeople, managers) etc.	10-15 min.
Conference leader, Jack Kearns introduces himself and the purpose of the conference. NHTSA representatives and ASA staff are introduced.	
BUSINESS CONDITIONS IN AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY TODAY	5 min.
Effects of laws and regulations on the cars we sell.	
DISCUSSION OF WHY NHTSA IS SPONSORING THIS CONFERENCE	5 min.
Mr. Reagan's emphasis on voluntary programs to increase belt usage.	
SALES PERSON IS A TEACHER	5 min.
Sales person teaches customer what to look for in new cars.	
VIDEOTAPE ON SAFETY BELTS	5 min.
Incorporating safety belt messages during:	
. Product presentation	
. Test drive	
. Delivery.	
SPENDING TIME WITH THE CUSTOMER	5 min.
Sales people need to spend more time with customers.	
SHOWING CONCERN FOR THE CUSTOMER	5 min.
Promoting safety belt usage shows concern for the customer and his family.	
VIDEOTAPE ON CHILD RESTRAINTS	5 min.
Promoting child restraints by:	
. Having child restraints available for test drives.	
drives.	
. Demonstrating how to install a child restraint.	
RESPONSIBILITY TO SOCIETY	5 min.
Business today is more than making money.	
BRAINSTORMING SESSION	15 min.
Jack Kearns: "I've just shown you the product, now <u>you</u> tell me how best to . . ."	
"What is the best way to sell safety?"	
"What is the best way to sell seat belts to today's customers?"	
CLOSING REMARKS/SUMMARY	10 min.
Actions that can be taken to promote seat belt usage.	
Responsibilities of car dealers in this campaign.	
EVALUATION OF CONFERENCE	15 min.
LUNCH (Dealers and Sales Personnel)	

The participants were given sufficient quantities of these materials for salespeople at the dealerships.

### Sales Training Meetings

For any program to be successful at an automobile dealership, it must first win the approval of the dealer. However, dealers rarely come into contact with the customers. It is the salesperson who must incorporate the program into the sales presentation and make the pitch to the customer. Additional sales training meetings were conducted by the Project Director at two of the participating dealerships to present the safety belt program directly to the salespeople. These sales meetings were not part of the original plan for the project. They were included to show salespeople how to:

1. Demonstrate safety belts.
2. Explain vehicle-sensitive retractors.
3. Overcome customer's objections to wearing safety belts.

These meetings were about 20-minutes long and were held before business hours.

The sales meetings opened by discussing some automobile accident statistics:

- . Leading cause of death for people under 45 years of age.
- . Every 16 seconds someone is injured.
- . Every nine minutes someone is killed.
- . Equivalent to a 727 passenger jet crashing every day.
- . Eighty percent of deaths and serious injuries occur in cars traveling less than 40 miles per hour.
- . Seventy-five percent of deaths or injuries occur less than 25 miles from home.

The purpose of these statistics was to persuade them that automobile accidents should be taken seriously. Also, it gave them facts that they could pass along to their customers.

A discussion of safety belts followed these accident statistics. A critical part of this discussion was how to put the safety belt on and how to make it comfortable for the wearer. The tension-relief mechanism was

explained to all salespeople. At one dealership, an automobile was available for the sales meeting, and this feature was demonstrated to all salespeople.

Vehicle-sensitive inertia reels were explained, using the diagrams in the Occupant Restraint System Features handbook. The selling features of this system were discussed in terms of comfort, freedom of upper body movement, and protection.

The final part of the sales meeting included a discussion of how to overcome customer's objections to wearing safety belts. The Project Director initiated this discussion, but encouraged the salespeople to respond to the objections. The purpose of this was twofold:

1. Allow salespeople to voice own objections to wearing safety belts.
2. Listen to other salespeople respond to those objections.

## SECTION 4

### EVALUATION OF AUTOMOBILE DEALERSHIP SAFETY BELT PROGRAM

There are two basic questions to be answered in the evaluation of the automobile dealership safety belt program:

1. Did the messages reach the automobile dealers and salespeople?
2. Did the messages reach the new car buyer?

#### Impact of Program on Automobile Dealers and Salespeople

The impact of the safety belt program was assessed in three stages:

1. Immediately after the conference.
2. One month following the conference.
3. Immediately after each sales training meeting.

#### Post-Conference Evaluation

Immediately after the conference, the dealers and salespeople were asked to evaluate two dimensions of the program:

1. Conference format.
2. Safety belt messages.

The results of each of these evaluations will be discussed below.

#### Conference Format

The dealers and salespeople approved of the conference format. The discussion of the benefits of promoting safety belts made its point. From

their comments, they would have liked more interaction and more discussion of these topics. Specifically:

1. Both dealers and salespeople agreed that the length of the conference (1-1/2 hours) was appropriate.
2. All but one of the participants would recommend that other dealers attend future conferences of this type.
3. For salespeople, the participants recommended either a sales meeting format or a conference. Some people objected to a conference because it takes them away from the dealership.

The brainstorming session in the conference was not as productive as we had anticipated. During the brainstorming session, the dealers and salespeople were asked to come up with their own ideas about how to sell safety belts to their customers. Typically, people are more likely to carry through with a project or idea if they feel it is their own. We had expected the brainstorming session to generate a number of ideas that the dealers and salespeople could take back to the dealership with them. However, the participants only repeated the ideas that had been presented; they were not able to generate their own ways to sell safety belts.

#### Safety Belt Message

The participants were also asked to evaluate five of the major themes of the safety belt program. They were shown five statements about safety features and safety belts, and asked whether they strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed with each statement. For purposes of analyses, these response categories were converted to numbers with four representing strongly agree and one representing strongly disagree. The mean response to each statement is shown in Table 4-1.

Table 4-1

#### Agreement with Safety Belt Messages

	<u>Dealers</u>	<u>Salespeople</u>
1. Today's car buyers are interested in safety features	2.6	3.4
2. Encouraging seat belt usage demonstrates my concern for customers' well-being	3.2	3.6
3. Encouraging seat belt usage is good for the image of the dealership	3.4	3.4
4. Encouraging seat belt usage can increase repeat business	2.8	3.2
5. Customers respond positively when asked to wear seat belts during the test drive	2.2	3.2
	n=6	n=5

As can be seen from Table 4-1, salespeople very much agree with these safety belt messages. The dealers, while they agree with them, are somewhat less positive. One point of divergence occurs with whether customers will respond positively to wearing safety belts on the test drive. The salespeople, who are closest to the customer, agree, while the dealers tend to disagree.

In conclusion, the dealers and salespeople who attended this conference agreed that both the content and the format of the conference was good. From some of the written comments, it was clear that safety belts was a topic that they had not concerned themselves with simply because no one had mentioned it to them before. Now that the topic had been discussed, they wanted to know more about it--benefits, overcoming buyer resistance, concern for the customers, etc.

#### Follow-Up Evaluations

Approximately one month after the conference, the participants were contacted again to determine whether they had initiated a safety belt program at the dealership. The results of the interviews with six dealers or their sales managers are summarized in this section.

1. All of the dealers reported discussing the safety belt materials with their salespeople.
2. Five out of six (83 percent) reported some type of safety belt program at the dealership:
  - At three dealerships safety belts are worn on test drives.
  - At two dealerships, they are demonstrated either as part of a thorough product presentation or on delivery of the car to the customer.
3. Five out of six had safety belt pamphlets on display for customers.
4. Five out of six wanted additional safety belt materials, such as:
  - Posters (four)
  - Videodisc Programs (three).
5. Four dealers reported having child safety seats on display in the parts department. One dealer (Saab) inquired whether Saab sold child restraints and checked into making one available.

6. None of the dealers had a child restraint available for test drives, but three dealers thought it was a good idea and were considering it.

That the conference made an impact on the dealer is shown through some of their comments during the interview:

1. One dealer was considering including safety belts in his advertising as part of a "We Care" theme.
2. Another dealer displayed his "Specialist in Occupant Restraint Systems" certificate in a prominent place in his showroom.
3. A third dealer was active in the Safety Committee of the Pennsylvania Automobile Dealers Association and the local Automobile Association of America (AAA). During the interview, child safety seats and loaner programs were discussed. When he learned that another Pennsylvania automobile dealer, in conjunction with AAA, started a loaner program, he decided it was a good idea and would bring it up at the next AAA meeting.

These ideas for including safety in the dealership activities indicate that the dealers were persuaded by the safety belt messages presented at the conference. However, these ideas were not acted upon, mainly due to the other demands on the dealers' time. The automobile industry is currently in a very uncertain state, and dealers do not have a great deal of time to devote to additional projects. In the conclusions and recommendations section we will address ways of capitalizing on this interest.

In summary, the follow-up evaluations suggest that the conference was successful. The initial reaction of the automobile dealers was to accept the safety belt messages and implement at least part of the program.

#### Sales Training Meetings

Following the sales meeting, the salespeople were shown five themes, or messages, which formed the basis for the safety belt program. The salesperson was asked to indicate the degree to which he/she agreed or disagreed with each statement. Collapsing together the two "Agree" categories and the two "Disagree" categories, it was found that:

1. Eighty-one percent agreed that today's customers are interested in safety features.
2. Sixty-eight percent agreed that customers will respond positively to being asked to wear their safety belt during the test ride.

3. One-hundred percent agreed that encouraging safety belt usage shows concern for the customer.
4. One-hundred percent agreed that encouraging safety belt usage is good for the image of the dealership.
5. Ninety-five percent agreed that encouraging safety belt usage can increase repeat business.

The responses were then converted to numbers, with four representing strongly agree and one representing strongly disagree. The mean agreement with each statement is shown in Table 4-2

Table 4-2

Agreement with Safety Belt Messages

	<u>Dealership A</u>	<u>Dealership B</u>
1. Today's car buyers are interested in safety features	3.2	2.8
2. Encouraging seat belt usage demonstrates my concern for customers' well-being	3.3	3.3
3. Encouraging seat belt usage is good for the image of the dealership	3.5	3.3
4. Encouraging seat belt usage can increase repeat business	3.5	3.5
5. Customers respond positively when asked to wear seat belts during the test drive	2.8	2.7
	n=8	n=12

In conclusion, salespeople agree with the basic themes of this safety belt program. The only major disagreement concerns whether customers will respond positively to being asked to wear safety belts during the test drive. To overcome this concern, salespeople need more experience in asking customers to buckle up.

Impact of Program on New Car Buyers

An important concern in assessing the effectiveness of the program is the extent to which the safety belt messages reached and influenced the wearing rates of the ultimate target audience, i.e., the new car buyer.

Since this was a pilot project, and the number of participating dealerships was small, the emphasis of the evaluation will be on the trends implied by the results, not the specific numbers obtained.

Given that the program messages have reached the salesperson and he/she is persuaded by them, then specific questions can be asked to determine:

1. To what extent, and under what circumstances, does he pass the message on to his/her new car customers?
2. To what extent do the customers recall having received the message?
3. To what extent did receiving the message affect their safety belt usage?

Two data collection approaches were employed in answering these questions.

The first approach involved sending "shoppers" to visit the showrooms of dealers who participated in the sales training meetings. These dealerships were chosen because their salespeople had the greatest contact with the program.

"Shoppers" were recruited informally by the project staff. Persons selected were articulate, had a demonstrated understanding of study objectives and the data they were to collect, were young enough to have young children, and had a car which was more than two years old. All shoppers were briefed concerning how the visit to the showroom was to be conducted (including the selection of the salesperson) and the various items of information that were to be obtained. In addition, each was given a set of written instructions to be reviewed immediately prior to their visit. The key aspects of each visit may be summarized as follows:

1. Visits were made by both couples and individuals.
2. In most cases, a call was made prior to the visit to assure that the salespeople assigned to the shopper was available. Salespeople were selected so as to:
  - . Assure that only salespersons who had attended the sales meetings were included in the sample.
  - . Assure that a different salesperson was contacted by each shopper or shopper couple.
3. Each shopper was to focus his/her attention on a midsized or smaller vehicle, i.e., vehicles that the general public more often might consider "unsafe." The shopper was to show interest in practical features of the vehicle rather than performance features. Shoppers were to specifically indicate that they had small children (to stimulate the salesperson to discuss child restraints).

4. The shoppers initially made no specific reference to safety features to permit the salesperson the opportunity to volunteer such information. If no information was volunteered, two probes were employed:
  - . Safety interest probe. The shopper asked one of a set of predeveloped questions about the safety of the vehicle without mentioning safety belts or child restraints directly.
  - . Belt retractor probe. The shopper asked specifically how the seat belt retractor worked.
5. Each visit involved a test drive, except in one case where poor weather prevented it.

Four (4) visits were made to Dealership A and three (3) to Dealership B. Six (6) male and one (1) female salespeople were contacted. All visits were performed within one month of the sales meeting.

The results of the shopping visits are as follows:

1. Both dealerships displayed the safety belt and child restraint pamphlets that they had been provided. The Dealership A displayed them in the back of the showroom--one of the four shoppers failed to notice them. Dealership B displayed them prominently at both ends of the showroom in the racks with the sales brochures.
2. One of the seven salespeople (at Dealership A) volunteered safety belt information and was judged to be very enthusiastic about safety features and safety belts. During the shopping visit, the salesman included the following information in his sales presentation:
  - . Comfort and convenience features of safety belts.
  - . Explanation of the retractor.
  - . Safety belt pamphlets.
3. When the safety interest probe was used with the six salespeople who had not volunteered safety belt information, one salesman responded by explaining how the retractor worked. The other five salespeople did not respond to this probe.
4. All of the salespeople responded to the safety belt probe. The salespeople typically gave information about comfort and convenience of the new retractors. Two of the salespeople gave incorrect or inadequate information to the shoppers. One salesman simply replied, "They're working." Another salesman told the shoppers that, "They'll work soon."

5. Test drives were made on six of the seven shopping trips. The salesman who initially volunteered safety belt information also wore the safety belt during the test drive. The salesman who responded to the safety interest probe wore his safety belt only after the shopper started to drive and had put his one.
6. One of the salespeople volunteered information about child safety seats when the couple mentioned that they had a small child. However, he did not tell the couple they could buy one at the dealership, or how to install them, etc.

One of the salespeople provided incorrect and potentially dangerous information concerning the protection of small children. He recommended that the shopper fold down the rear seat of the hatchback, lay out a blanket, and let the infant ride there unrestrained.

None of the other salespeople discussed child safety seats with the shoppers.

In conclusion, salespeople do transmit safety belt information to customers, especially when the customers express an interest in safety belts.

The shopping visits provided data to determine to what extent, and under what circumstances, salespeople discuss safety belts and child restraints with their customers. In order to answer the remaining questions concerning what information the customers recall receiving and the effect of this information on their use of belts, we asked the customers themselves. Both of the dealerships visited by the shoppers provided the names of persons who purchased new cars from them in the month following the sales meetings. Project staff conducted informal discussions with these buyers. The major points from these discussions are as follows:

1. Of the 62 customers contacted, 24.2 percent indicated that the salesperson had provided safety belt information. Given the findings from the shopping visits discussed above, the present finding indicates that even salespersons who did not volunteer information to the shoppers were mentioning safety belts to at least some of their customers.
2. Table 4-3 summarizes the types of safety information provided to the customers. Information about safety facts and features was provided and most frequently followed by comfort and convenience features.
3. Three of the 15 customers who were informed concerning safety belts reported that they have increased their frequency of belt use as a result of the salesperson's presentation. In addition, one of the customers also reported that their spouse also started wearing them more frequently.

4. Table 4-4 summarizes the reported frequency of use of safety belts. It also shows the reported use for the customers who were informed, contrasting their use before and after they received the message. It can be seen from the table that the distribution for the non-informed group is similar to that of the informed group before they received safety belt information from the salesperson. However, it can be seen that the frequency of use for the informed group after receiving the message has shifted toward more frequent use, relative to their usage level before receiving the message.
5. None of the customers recalled being told anything about child restraints.

Table 4-3

Summary of Safety Belt Information  
 Provided to New Car Customers

Information Provided:	Yes	24.2%
	No	75.8%
	n = 62*	

Type of Information Provided:\*\*

Safety Facts/Features	80.0%
Comfort/Convenience	53.3%
Pamphlet Given	33.3%
Customer shown or told how to adjust belt	33.3%
Customer shown or told how to put belts on	26.7%
Customer told how belt retractors work	20.0%
Other safety belt information	6.7%

\* Dealership A n=18; Dealership B n=44.

\*\* Percentages do not add to 100 since many customers received more than one type of information.

Table 4-4

Summary of Frequency of Safety Belt  
 Use for Informed and Non-Informed Customers

Frequency of Use	Non-Informed Customers	Informed Customers	
		Before Message	After Message
Never/Occasionally	63.7%	60.0%	53.3%
About Half the Time	00.0%	6.7%	00.0%
Usually/Always	36.3%	33.3%	46.7%
n =	44*	15	

\* Total n=44, three of the non-informed customers were not asked about safety belt use.

## SECTION 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The goal of this project was to determine the feasibility of promoting safety belt usage at the point-of-sale. The results of this effort can be broken down into two components:

1. Feasibility of promoting safety belt usage at point-of-sale.
2. Recommended improvements to program.

Each of these components will be discussed below.

#### Feasibility of Promoting Safety Belt Usage at Point-of-Sale

The results of the evaluation clearly indicate that automobile dealers and salespeople can be persuaded to promote safety belts to their customers. In our survey of new car buyers, salespeople talked about safety belts with 24.2 percent of them. This means that almost one out of four buyers heard the safety belt message. Of those that heard the message, some customers reported that they increased their frequency of usage.

On the basis of these results, the potential reach of safety belt messages presented at the point-of-sale is quite high. Between nine and ten million cars are sold annually in the United States. With a point-of-sale program there is the potential for reaching more than two million Americans each year. As salespeople become more comfortable with including safety belt information in their sales presentations, we can expect even more drivers and their families to be informed as they visit a showroom to comparison shop or to look at new cars.

#### Recommended Improvements to the Program

Recommendations can be made for improving the program in three different areas:

1. Support for the program.
2. Format of the program.
3. Content of the program.

### Support for the Program

In order to gain broad-based support for this program among automobile dealers, it is necessary to find a sponsor other than the federal government. Automobile dealers are distrustful of the government and tend to blame poor business conditions on government-imposed regulations.

As part of the conference evaluation, the dealers were asked who should sponsor future programs of this type. Five out of six dealers recommended the National Automobile Dealers Association (NADA) as a potential sponsor. NADA has established credibility with both dealers and manufacturers to successfully promote a safety belt program. This program must be part of a coordinated effort between the sponsor, manufacturer, and dealer. The manufacturers' role in promoting safety belt usage must be increased to include safety belt information in advertisements, in customer materials, and in sales training. The dealer must be encouraged to implement the safety belt program. The role of the sponsor is to support these efforts and serve as a reminder or reinforcer to keep the program going.

Recent evidence from manufacturers indicates that they are willing to support the program. Mr. John Manikas of Ford Motor Company has stated that safety belt information is now being included as part of the sales training program for the Ford Motor Company. In a December 1981 announcement to the dealers, GM promised to support NHTSA's efforts to promote safety belt usage. Volkswagen of America has always put safety belt information in their sales training and in their automobile advertising to promote their passive restraint system. Other manufacturers may be planning similar activities.

### Format of the Program

One of the criticisms of the conference was that it took time away from the salespeople and, for salespeople, time is money. This problem can be overcome by holding the conference in the evening. Evening conferences have disadvantages, since the participants are tired and may be less enthusiastic.

One of the recommendations made by the dealers and salespeople was to condense the conference and present it as a sales meeting. This recommendation was followed and two sales meetings were held (see Section 3, Presentation of Safety Belt Program). The sales meeting format is less formal and may be more suited for this type of program. The manufacturer should provide specific information about the features of the safety belt systems, such as tension-relief mechanisms. Since most dealerships now have videodisc players, these audiovisual facilities should be used to show sales people how to talk with customers about safety belts. Finally, a program guide should be written for the sales manager, so that he/she can periodically present the program to new salespeople or for review.

After talking with a number of dealers and salespeople, it is our opinion that the benefits of conferences are limited to exposing people to the information and motivating them to listen. It is not sufficient to initiate a full safety belt program. It is necessary to present this information directly to salespeople, who are closest to the customer, in order for the program to be effective.

### Content of the Program

Finally, some changes are needed in the content of the program. It is clear that sales people understand the "why" of promoting safety belts, but they do not seem to know "how" or "what." For example, during the brainstorming session at the July conference, the dealers and salespeople could not think of original ways to promote safety belts at the dealership. They were able to repeat the promotional techniques which were discussed during the conference. Future programs must include several examples of salespeople promoting safety belts to their customers.

In initially developing this program, the major hurdle was whether sales people could be motivated to promote safety belts. Most of the effort was aimed at overcoming that hurdle. It was assumed that if sales people were motivated, they could incorporate safety belt information on their own. This assumption was wrong. In talking with salespeople, we found many gaps in their knowledge:

1. Some did not know how to put on a safety belt. They thought it had to be "pre-adjusted."
2. Few were aware of the tension-relief mechanism.
3. Several thought that belt effectiveness could be demonstrated by jerking them out.
4. Our mystery shopper reported receiving wrong information about transporting young children.

A safety belt program must present basic facts about safety belts and their use including:

1. How they work.
2. How to put them on.
3. How to wear them most comfortably.

### Summary

On the basis of this pilot program, we recommend that future automobile dealership safety belt programs be composed of three separate components:

1. Conference to motivate dealers to promote safety belts at the dealership.

2. Sales training meetings to show salespeople how to promote safety belts.
3. Customer materials to stimulate interest in safety belts.

Conferences are among the most efficient ways to reach a large number of automobile dealers. Conferences have other advantages too, primarily their association with manufacturers' promotional events. For this reason the emphasis of their conferences should be on motivation and only highlight the informational aspects of the program. Information can be presented to dealers, but it is best packaged in a selling format and presented to salespeople. The objective of the conference should be to motivate the dealers to take the sales package back to the dealership with a commitment to implementing the program. An important finding of this pilot project was that dealers are not necessarily negative towards safety belts and safety as much as they simply have not considered them. The conference program should be aimed at this innocence and not at overcoming resistance. The conference leader must have credibility with the dealers, but he or she must also be enthusiastic. Finally, the conference should be short, about one hour. If too much time is spent discussing safety belts, the momentum tends to wane.

The informational aspects of the program should be aimed at the salespeople who are the closest to the customers. At the close of the conference, the dealers should be given a Sales Training Package, provided by the manufacturers, which gives manufacturer-specific information about how the belts work, how to adjust them, and most importantly, how to sell them. This Sales Training Package should be used at sales meetings to present the information to salespeople. The dealer or sales manager should introduce the safety belt program explaining the benefits to the salespeople, as well as the benefits to the dealership. The Sales Training Package should include the following training materials:

1. Program guide for the sales manager.
2. Videotape/videodisc sales presentations which include safety belt promotions.
3. Handbook on occupant restraint features including both safety belts and child safety seats.
4. Any other sales aid that the manufacturer may want to include.

Since sales meetings are relatively short (20 minutes), the Sales Training Package may have to be broken into three separate components:

1. How occupant restraint devices work.
2. How to promote safety belts.
3. How to promote child safety seats.

By breaking up the package into these components, new information can be presented about each component, and the program can be presented over a period of time.

Customer materials are also needed to present the messages. Posters or videodisc programs can be used to stimulate the customers' interest in safety belts. As we found with the "shoppers," salespeople do respond to guidelines about safety belts. These materials can also reinforce the messages presented by the salesperson.

In summary, the automobile dealership safety belt program was more effective than anticipated. We anticipated that the dealers and salespeople would be very resistant to the program and towards safety in general. What we found was an interest in safety belts and a concern for the customer which can be channeled into a safety belt promotion program. The program should be refined in the ways outlined above, but it can be used to reach salespeople in dealerships across the country.

Safety belt usage has been encouraged by a number of different groups: physicians, civic groups, police, employers, etc., and still the usage rates are only about 11 percent. An effort has been made to reach out to automobile dealers and salespeople to promote safety belts at the point-of-sale. As one salesperson commented during the evaluation: "It's about time the government got around to us. We can do it!"

APPENDIX A  
MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT FOR AUTOMATIC  
RESTRAINTS SYSTEMS

## APPENDIX A

### MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT FOR AUTOMATIC RESTRAINTS SYSTEMS

Materials for promoting automatic safety belts were also developed so that when these restraints become available on all automobiles, materials will be available to help automobile dealers and salespeople successfully promote them. The MED system was used to develop the following materials:

1. Videotape, "The Automatic Restraint System: A Sales-Plus Factor."
2. Videotape script for customers to point out the advantages of automatic belt systems.
3. Two radio scripts for PSAs.
4. Two television scripts for PSAs.
5. Two posters to be used at the dealership.

After developing the scripts for the proposed television and radio PSAs, we learned that these promotional materials were not eligible for free air time as public service announcements. In order to be eligible for free air time, automatic belt systems would have to be available on every car on the highway. The public service aspect of the announcement would be to encourage their use. At the present time, the only way to use automatic restraints is to purchase a new car with these restraints. In essence, the PSA would be promoting the purchase of a new car rather than promoting the use of a universally available feature. Therefore, none of the television or radio scripts were produced.

The videotape, "The Automatic Restraint System: A Sales-Plus Factor" was produced. This videotape was modeled after the videotape for manual belt systems and showed salespeople how to promote the automatic belt system to their customers. This videotape was not shown to the salespeople at the conference because of the uncertainty as to when automatic belt systems would be available.

## REFERENCES

Blatt, R. C. "Can Safety Behaviors be Changed?" Applied Science Associates, Inc. paper, 1979.

Hart, Peter D. Research Associates, Inc. Public attitudes towards passive restraints. Final Report. DOT-HS-8-01953, 1978.