

GM Phony Flat Helps Drivers Control Auto

General Motors has developed a flat tire simulator and this week made it available to driving instructors and others.

The device offers drivers an opportunity to experience safety -- and learn to handle -- the change in automobile driving characteristics caused by a sudden loss of tire air pressure.

In the early days of motoring, when most tires were inflated with a tube, flat tires occurred with greater frequency than today. Most drivers became practiced in bringing the car safely to a stop.

Such incidents have become relatively rare, but occasionally occur despite improvements in design, materials and construction which have steadily improved tire dependability. However, these advances have also limited the driver's opportunities to learn to control the automobile.

"THE PRINCIPAL importance of the simulator is that it gives the student a real-life, at-the-wheel knowledge of what actually happens to a car when a tire suddenly goes flat," C.J. Brady, GM Proving Ground Director, explained. "The instructor is there as a safety measure and the flat can be staged until the student learns to do the right things."

A flat tire should be of no serious consequence to a normally attentive experienced driver, Brady explained. He should be able to supply the necessary additional control required to keep the vehicle in its path.

General Motors, however, long interested in all phases of traffic safety, recognized the need for some means of surprising student motorists with a flat tire and permitting them to practice handling the situation safely. The problem lay in not endangering the student and keeping the costs within the budgets of most driver training classes.

The solution appeared in the simulator GM introduced this week during the National Safe-

ty Council's 'Winter Driving Conference at Stevens Point, Wis. Designed originally for automotive tests but adaptable to high school and other driver training courses, the device has a number of advantages over those previously available.

The GM simulator permits the same tire to be deflated repeatedly, thereby reducing training costs.

Eliminates potentially dangerous explosives often used to create a sudden loss of tire pressure.

Operates simply and dependably.

Can be made easily and inexpensively.

Design simplicity, which enables a high school to fabricate its own simulator, was one of the principal objectives achieved by GM Proving Ground engineers who conceived and perfected the device. Triggered by a simple change in air pressure, it fits an automobile's front or rear wheel, is easily installed and removed and requires no changes in the automobile body structure.

SUGGESTED training sites are closed roadways with safe shoulders and an absence of nearby obstructions or other unobstructed space such as a large, empty parking lot.

Because of the variety of road and traffic situations, there is no single recommendation for the proper control of a vehicle during a sudden flat tire. GM suggests that if a flat tire occurs the driver should remove his foot from the accelerator and apply corrective steering and then, as the car slows, brake it gradually to a stop off the road surface.

Construction drawings for the simulator are available to qualified applicants free of charge from General Motors. Requests should be addressed to Educational Relations--Public Relations Staff, General Motors Building, Detroit, Michigan 48202.

U-M Safety Prof Asks More Cops -And Tickets

The effectiveness of traffic laws depends upon motorists' awareness of the risk of detection, arrest, and conviction for violations and the severity of the penalties involved, Prof. Roger C. Cramton of the University of Michigan Law School said at the second annual Traffic Safety Research Symposium.

Sponsored by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, the symposium brought together 300 traffic safety and behavior science researchers, traffic officials, insurance executives, and national safety leaders in a three-day session.

Cramton reported widespread agreement among legal authorities that motorists are more worried about being caught and convicted than they are afraid of the penalties involved.

Studies have shown that increases in the apprehension rate or in the level of fines for illegal parking will produce measurable reductions of parking violations.

However, there is insufficient evidence to indicate the effectiveness of present traffic enforcement in preventing moving violations and other accident-producing behavior.

The basis of skepticism concerning the present system's performance rests on several grounds: extremely low apprehension rates and enforcement levels, the uncertainty as to the real relationship between traffic violations and accidents, and the mildness of the penalties handed out to traffic violators.

Cramton said further study of the effect of enforcement levels on accidents, violations, and driver behavior is badly needed.

"Existing information pertains almost entirely to rural roads and particularly to super-highways, roads that have the lowest accident rates in any area. Effective enforcement on secondary roads and on urban traffic may require quite different approaches and strategies. But what they should be remains to be shown."

Attempts to provide simple and understandable standards in defining offenses run the risk of later finding that illegal driving may be unrelated to accident-producing driving.

Cramton cited a study of col-

lege students which showed no correlation between speeding citations and accident rates. A number of other studies have found that drivers who have more traffic violations in general also have had more accidents.

"One urgent need is for more reliable information concerning the relationship of violations and accidents, not only as a general proposition, but with respect to specific violations," he commented.

Noting a trend toward mildness in court penalties, Prof. Cramton cited a study showing a marked decline in arrests and convictions for drunk driving in Michigan between 1957 and 1966, even though the number of traffic accidents, deaths, drivers, vehicles, and traffic officers increased.

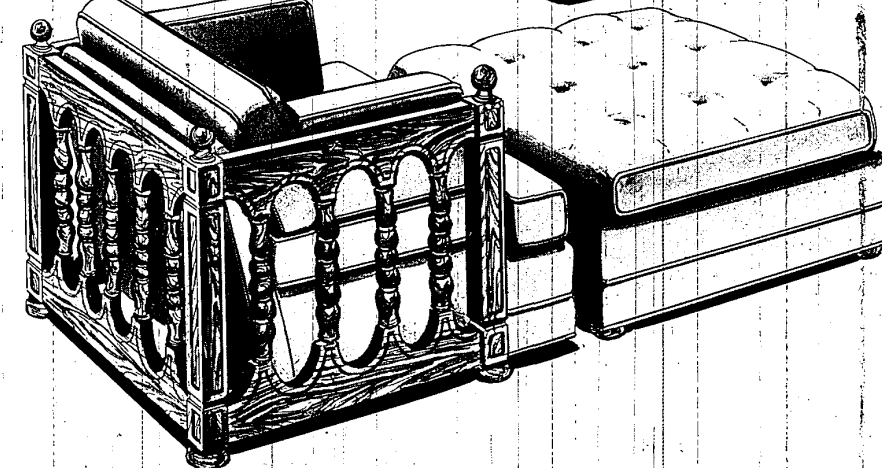
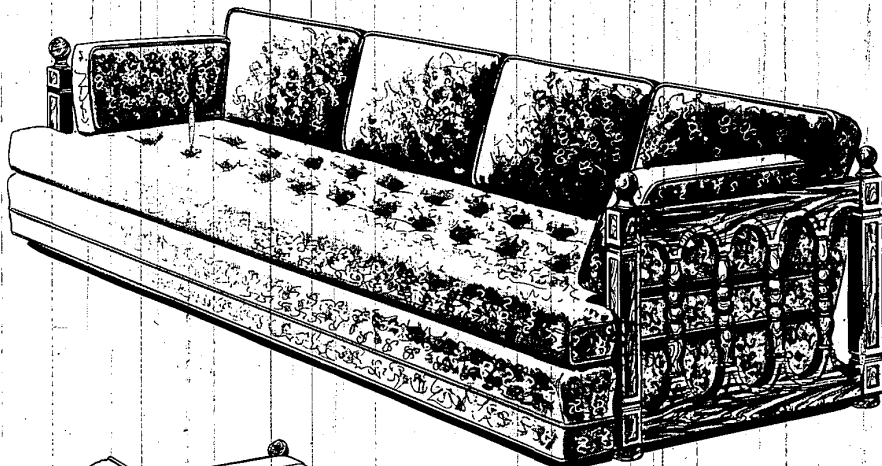
Of a group of more than 1,000 drivers who killed someone while driving under the influence of alcohol, a California study reported that only one-fourth were convicted of drunk driving and less than 5 percent went to jail.

"Enforcement officials tend toward the view that what is needed is more and better enforcement: more traffic police, better detection techniques, and stiffer penalties. While we believe that better detection techniques should be explored, we do not think increased severity will accomplish anything barring a monumental--and unlikely--change in public attitudes."

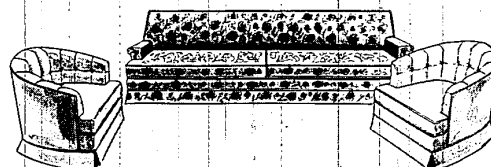
"The regulatory control of drinking and driving in the United States is rather lax precisely because the social climate does not favor more stringent controls. Stiffer penalties will merely lead to more difficulty in enforcement. Nor is it likely that the problem drinker will be affected by stepped-up enforcement," Cramton said.

"A general conclusion is that a person drives as he lives and a few sessions with a driver improvement analyst do not seem to affect deep-seated personality traits and attitudes. It is not inconceivable that the most economic means of improving driver habits is to raise the apprehension rate for violations by employing more police or better detection techniques," he observed.

DOBB'S Decorator Groups

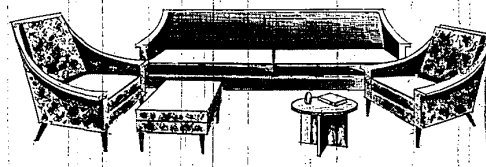


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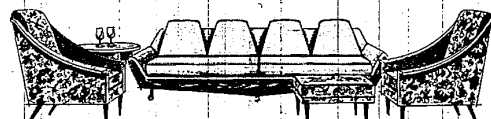
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