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INFORMATION ACT (FOIA), 5 U.S.C . 552(B)(6)

Howell, Rosa (NHTSA)

From: Clarence Ditlow <cmdiii@autosafety.org>
Sent: Tuesday, January 15, 2013 4:54 PM
To: Smith, Daniel (NHTSA); Borris, Frank (NHTSA); Yon, Scott (NHTSA); Hershman, Larry (NHTSA); Ong, Peter (NHTSA)
Cc: Michael Brooks
Subject: October 5, 2012 1998 Jeep Grand Cherokee Fatal Fire Crash

Please include the following information in your investigation of Jeep fires, EA12-005.

13th & 14th Fatal - 11th Accident

Date: October 5, 2012

Time: 8pm

Incident: Multi Vehicle

Location: Interstate 81 S/B just past Exit 310

Fatal Victims Names: [REDACTED], 39, of Staunton, Va (Driver) and [REDACTED], 18 of Staunton, Va (Passenger)

Vehicle: 1998 Jeep Grand Cherokee

Seat Belts: YES

DUI Related: NO

Speed: N/A

Cause: A 2002 Chrysler PT Cruiser and a 1998 Jeep Grand Cherokee were stopped in traffic that had been backed up for miles because of roadwork. As the two vehicles waited, a 2007 tractor-trailer rammed into the Jeep, causing it to rear-end the PT Cruiser. The Jeep caught fire, and a passenger in the PT Cruiser was able to pull a passenger in the front seat to safety before it became fully engulfed. The driver and a back-seat passenger in the Jeep died at the scene.

<http://shenandoahvalleyfire.webs.com/fatalinfofrederick.htm>

Here is some information sent to me by an immediate eye witness to the crash, Jennelle Embrey.

As soon as we entered I81, we immediately found ourselves sitting at the end of a traffic jam. I chuckled and commented how we had crazy luck to get on I81 only to sit in a traffic jam. At that moment, we were hit. In the next few seconds we were spinning and crashing. I saw flashes of a truck as we spun and crashed. Each time a crash happened, I looked around thankful to still be alive. But then another crash happened and more images of a big rig at our car.

Our car landed in the guardrail and I crawled out into the middle of I81 in the darkness of night. I realized a Jeep was also hit. I could see the Mom and 2 teenage boys struggling. Confused as to whether I was awake or having a nightmare, I gestured for my Dad to look towards the Jeep. There was a small fire at the back bumper of the vehicle – where the Jeep's gas tank is located.

Dad immediately ran over to the Jeep. He grabbed the first person he got to, the teen in the front passenger seat. The teen was pinned only by his seatbelt. The Mom knew my Dad was trying to help them so she reached over and released her teen's seat belt.

My Dad pulled her teenage son out the window and away from the Jeep. There was a teen in the back screaming for his life and fighting to get out. My Dad pulled on the teen in the back but that teen was pinned by the shifting of the seats during the crash. As the pinned teen struggled to get out, my Dad ran around to the driver's door to help the Mom. The Mom was not yet trying to get out and seemed to wonder, as was I, if she was in a nightmare. Then there was the noise. It sounded like a gust of wind only it was a gust of fire. The entire vehicle was engulfed in flames. As the fire consumed the Jeep, the other teen was struggling to get out and the Mom was still processing the wreck that had just happened. We stood in horror and watched the Mom and the other teen burn to death. The saved teen watched the burning Jeep with us as he tearfully screamed, "Mom! Mom! Mom!"

Clarence

Clarence Ditlow
Executive Director
Center for Auto Safety
1825 Connecticut Avenue NW Ste 330
Washington DC 20009-5725