

Importance of occupant safety growing in India



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THE AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY is at the core of India's manufacturing economy and the country is all set to become one of the world's most attractive automotive markets for both manufacturers and consumers. The resulting benefits to society such as economic growth, increased jobs and stability for families employed by the automotive industry, are significant.

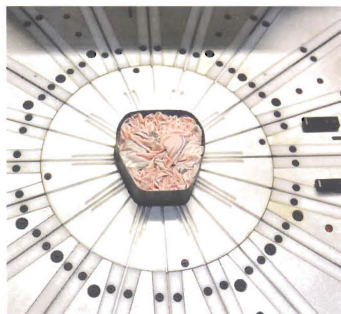
The Indian automotive landscape over the past decade has significantly aligned itself on the environmental front to international standards by implementing stringent emission norms. 2010-2020 is the UN's decade of road safety. The next few years should witness the Indian automotive sector implement safety standards in line with international norms. India in general follows UN ECE safety regulations.

India has a very high number of deaths due to road accidents, and Indian automotive safety standards have been criticised as being insufficient and ineffective. Since 2006, India has recorded more road deaths per year than any other nation, with around 230,000 dying annually.

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has not notified all vehicle manufacturers to provide safety features in new vehicles which will be tested and certified under the 'Bharat New Vehicle Safety Assessment Program' (BNVSAP). The current plan is to have a voluntary implementation from October 2017 and make it mandatory from October 2020.

India currently does not have a new car assessment programme to provide buyers with independent reports of vehicles' crash safety and vehicle makers are not required to meet the United Nations' basic crash test standards, something that is mandatory in markets across the world.

In this context, the Bharat New



The folding process for the driver airbags is a specialised, automated function. The Rane TRW plant produces around 400 airbags (both driver and passenger) a day in a single shift.

Vehicle Safety Assessment Program is a proposed New Car Assessment Program for India. Cars sold in the country will be assigned star ratings based on their safety performance. It will be implemented in phases, according to the plans being drawn up by the National Automotive Testing and R&D Infrastructure Project (NATRIIP).

New cars sold in India will need to comply with voluntary star ratings based on crash safety performance tests. Critical safety features such as airbags, ABS and seatbelts will become standard in cars sold in India resulting from rankings and mandatory crash testing. Cars will gradually have to meet more stringent norms such as pedestrian protection, whiplash injury and child restraint systems standards and requirements. We also see many OEMs starting to offer frontal airbags as standard and side and curtain airbags as optional, which is an encouraging aspect to bring in more new technologies to improve passenger safety in India.

MAJOR DRIVERS FOR FRONTAL IMPACT PROTECTION

Installation requirements like those in Brazil push the market

penetration with airbags, whereas the performance as such is not described. This initiates the risk of an undesired lower technology.

Performance-based legislation like in UN-R 94 or FMVSS208 describes the minimum protection performance of vehicles and systems, making the installation of airbags obligatory for most of the cases.

Consumer protection programs, like BNVSAP, define usually a higher level of safety to inform the consumer about the different aspects of safety.

NCAPs have been shown as the most powerful driving force of improvements in vehicle safety. A combination of legislation on the protection of the occupant and a harmonised consumer programme, like a BNVSAP, would be a further step up for fostering road safety resulting in vehicles being manufactured with increased content of safety technologies.

With the government of India promoting occupant safety and road safety to reduce fatalities in a big way, we expect the auto industry in the country to introduce passive safety technologies to meet these regulations and the opening of the Rane TRW's new airbag facility in Chennai recently demonstrates the company's commitment to support technology evolution in the passenger vehicles.

We anticipate exponential growth in the application of frontal airbags over the next decade and Rane TRW will be well positioned to support both global OEMs and domestic OEMs located in India with their growth aspirations to bring in these technologies to their vehicles. We have a seatbelt plant in operation since 1997 in Chennai and the new airbag plant was also installed in the same campus this year. Every effort made by the auto industry to save lives will be a step in the right direction. ■

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