




## Memorandum

Date: July 11, 2023

Subject: INFORMATION: Audit Announcement | NHTSA's Special Crash Investigations |  
Project No. 23S3003S000  
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

From: David Pouliott   
Assistant Inspector General for Surface Transportation Audits

To: National Highway Traffic Safety Administrator

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According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), an estimated 42,795 people died in motor vehicle crashes in the United States in 2022.<sup>1</sup> To assist in its mission to save lives and prevent injuries, NHTSA created its Special Crash Investigations (SCI) program,<sup>2</sup> which the automotive safety community can then use to improve the performance of advanced safety systems<sup>3</sup> in cars, light trucks, school buses, and other vehicles. For example, the SCI program played a pivotal role in the establishment of Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard 208,<sup>4</sup> which measures how effectively a passenger vehicle would protect its occupants in the event of a frontal crash.

Given NHTSA's goal to conduct timely crash investigations and provide data to the automotive safety community to improve the performance of advanced safety systems, we are initiating a review of NHTSA's SCI program. Our objective is to assess the SCI program's (1) selection of crashes for investigation, (2) collection and analysis of special crash investigation data, and (3) use of this data to improve vehicle safety.

We plan to begin the audit in the coming weeks and will contact your audit liaison to schedule an entrance meeting. We will conduct our work at NHTSA Headquarters and, if necessary, NHTSA's Regional Offices. We will also reach out

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<sup>1</sup> NHTSA Traffic Safety Facts (April 2023). This represents an increase of about 10 percent as compared to 38,824 fatalities reported from 2020.

<sup>2</sup> SCI collects crash investigation information, which ranges from basic data contained in routine police and insurance crash reports to comprehensive data from special reports by professional crash investigation teams.

<sup>3</sup> Advance safety systems are vehicle technologies designed to increase the safety of the driving vehicle and reduce the number of crashes with fatalities or serious injuries.

<sup>4</sup> Standard No. 208; Occupant Crash Protection, 49 C.F.R. § 571.208.

to automotive manufacturers, other Government agencies, law enforcement agencies, insurance companies, vehicle owners, engineers, and medical personnel, if necessary. If you have any questions, please contact me or Wendy Harris, Program Director.

cc: DOT Audit Liaison, M-1 NHTSA  
Audit Liaison, NPO-310