

March Historically a Momentous Month for Truck Underride Safety Advocacy; Beware the Ides of March!

March has historically been a momentous, memorable month for truck underride safety advocacy. Not that other months are totally devoid of such activity, but I have observed a noticeable pattern:

1. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) has studied and reported on the truck underride problem for many years. After our underride crash on May 4, 2013, we discovered that they had published a report on this issue just a few months earlier on **March 14, 2013**, as well as a prior report on **March 1, 2011**.
2. On the 37th anniversary of our marriage, our family launched the **AnnaLeah & Mary Stand Up for Truck Safety Petition** on **March 19, 2014**, with one of the petition requests being to **improve truck underride protection** (rear, side, and front on tractor trailers, as well as for Single Unit Trucks).
3. Later that week, on **March 23, 2014**, I published a Youtube video to explain why we had launched the petition and what we were asking for—including an upgrade of the weak, ineffective federal underride standards.
4. During the almost three years which have passed since that terribly tragic day in May, we continue to uncover new (to us) information which surely should have led to improved underride protection long before now. For example, about a month ago, I became aware of a **March 16, 1977** (when I was 21—just a few days from my wedding) Senate Investigative hearing, which was reported on in the **March 29, 1977** IIHS Status Report.
5. This is how that report began: *The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety has released the results of a crash test program focused on the deadly problem of car-into-truck underride crashes. Appearing as lead-off witness at a **March 16** Senate Investigative hearing, the Institute's president, William Haddon, Jr., M.D., presented crash test films and analyses showing that: The 25 year-old federal "rear end protection" standard for devices on the backs of tractor-trailers and trucks is "a sham."*
6. Further, Haddon warned Senators, "Blood has been shed, heads literally have rolled and **countless thousands of Americans have been injured** because these agencies did not act. Further inaction would be inexcusable."

7. On **March 5, 2016**, we delivered our second petition to Washington, DC, when we took our Vision Zero Petition Book with 20,000 signatures to the Department of Transportation and President Obama. We asked for a Vision Zero Executive Order to pave the way for Vision Zero Rulemaking policies so that a truly effective and **comprehensive underride standard** can be issued.
8. On **March 10, 2016**, the Vision Zero Petition Book and 20,000 signatures were posted as a Public Comment on the current rear underride rulemaking.
9. On **March 12, 2016**, Jerry and I were privileged to participate in a successful side guard crash test in Hillsborough, North Carolina. This innovative side/rear combination can be **retrofit** to existing trucks on the road. Imagine the potential for saving lives!
10. On **March 2, 2016**, just three days prior to our recent delivery of the Vision Zero Petition, I discovered a **March 19, 1969**, Federal Highway Administration underride rulemaking document on the Federal Register which indicated that their intent was to extend underride protection to **the sides of large vehicles**! Eight years before my wedding day, when I was 13 years-old, DOT was intending to call for stronger underride protection. And yet, 44 years later, when my daughter Mary was 13 and AnnaLeah was 17, we still had not gotten it right! That's just wrong!
11. It is my fervent hope that, when **March 2017** rolls around, we will be celebrating a vastly improved federal standard—enthusiastically and immediately adopted by the trucking industry—for all-around-the-truck underride protection at higher speeds, including now-exempt single unit trucks as well as retrofitted to existing trucks and trailers.
12. If this seems like a costly venture, try comparing it to the price paid by thousands upon thousands of individuals and families during the past decades of ineffective underride protection—added to the countless precious people who will be saved in the years to come from tragic, preventable death by underride.
13. **This is not rocket science**; it can be done and **the technology** is already available!