



**City
of
Milwaukee**

*INTERDEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE
LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU
RESEARCH & ANALYSIS SECTION*

M E M O

To: Members of the Public Safety Committee
From: Mary Turk, Fiscal Review Analyst - Senior
Date: 1/30/08
Subject: Safety Issues Related to Neighborhood Electric Vehicles

The following is in response to your request for information on the safety of Neighborhood Electric Vehicles (NEVs). There is not very much information available about the safety of NEVs except for what is presented below.

During March of 1998, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) Vehicle Research Test Center (VRTC) conducted a study of two Low Speed Vehicles (LSVs), a Bombardier NEV and a Global Electric Motor Cars NEV. It examined the vehicles with respect to seat belts, stability, stopping distance, electrolyte spillage and glazing, and subjected them to braking and dynamic handling tests. The seat belts on the NEVs were deemed to be adequately anchored to the structure. Regarding stability, the study concluded that a NEV with a static stability factor below 1.0 with 2 occupants could probably tip easily in a tight turn at 20 mph. For stopping distance, from 20 miles per hour, the Bombardier easily passed the requirements while the Global NEV passed marginally. With respect to the issue of electrolyte spillage in a crash or rollover, it was noted the Bombardier NEV appeared to be capable of shielding the occupants from the batteries so long as the fiberglass shell was in tact. The Global NEV did not have the batteries shielded from the occupant area.

The most recent evaluation of the safety of NEVs was in a 2002 publication of "Consumers' Research" reprinted from an Insurance Institute for Highway Safety Status Report. The report points out that NEVs do not require doors or bumpers and they're not required to meet any crashworthiness test. In addition, the report contends that street legal doesn't mean street safe. The report states that light and flimsy NEVs would be out of their league in crashes with other vehicles going 35 mph. And furthermore, actual speeds of other motor vehicles on 35 mph streets frequently are a lot higher. According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety president Brian O'Neill, "NEVs are a safety problem waiting to happen."

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