

and agencies,<sup>2</sup> NHTSA undertook a review of its regulations and directives. During the course of this review, we identified regulations that could be proposed for elimination as unnecessary or for revision to improve their comprehensibility, application, or appropriateness.

We identified FMVSS 101 as one of those regulations because it appeared to be a candidate either for elimination or revision. We were concerned that the Standard might be imposing a needless regulatory burden on the public by regulating aspects of motor vehicle design that were beyond what was needed to assure safety.

To explore these concerns further, the agency proposed a number of alternative ways that might reduce the regulatory burden of this standard. Specifically, in a May 30, 1996 notice of proposed rulemaking (61 FR 27039), we identified the following approaches to amending FMVSS 101: (1) Rescinding the standard; (2) regulating only those controls and displays whose function is related to motor vehicle safety, and removing outdated provisions; (3) regulating only those controls and displays required by other FMVSSs; (4) consolidating all control and display requirements into FMVSS 101; and (5) permitting the use of International Standards Organization (ISO) symbols on some or all controls and displays currently required to be identified. We announced that if we decided not to rescind FMVSS 101, we might adopt one or more of the other proposals.

The public comments on the proposal indicated that the current requirements are not imposing unnecessary regulatory burdens. None of the commenters urged rescission of the standard. Further, there was no broad consensus, even among the vehicle manufacturers, in support of any of the proposals.

After reviewing the public comments, we published a final rule, announcing that we had decided not to adopt any of the proposals (62 FR 32538; June 16, 1997). We nonetheless amended the standard by removing outdated provisions.

In response to the proposal to regulate only those controls and displays whose function is "related to motor vehicle safety," some commenters questioned our suggestion in the NPRM that some controls and displays were not related to safety. In the final rule, we did not

provide guidance on which controls and displays are or are not safety related.<sup>3</sup>

As to our proposal to permit the use of ISO symbols to identify some or all controls and displays currently required by the standard to be identified, commenters from the motor vehicle industry generally supported that proposal. The American Automobile Manufacturers Association (AAMA) supported use of the ISO symbols, noting that symbols not specified in FMVSS 101 have been used in U.S. vehicles for years and that the "motoring public has been educated as to the meaning of these symbols."

On the other hand, public interest groups raised concerns about the ISO symbols. The Center for Auto Safety (CAS) urged us not to permit ISO symbols because of potential adverse safety consequences if a driver were uncertain how to interpret the symbols. Commenters opposed to using ISO symbols also cited several past NHTSA rulemakings, especially several on the brake standards, in which the agency had expressed reluctance to permit ISO symbols whose meaning it did not believe to be intuitively obvious, *i.e.*, immediately understandable without the necessity for any education or memorization.

In the response to these comments, we expressed our commitment to "exploring the possibilities of harmonizing its regulatory requirements with the regulatory requirements of other nations, provided that such harmonization does not reduce the safety protection afforded to the American public."

### III. Concerns Underlying This Proposal

Two primary concerns underlie this proposal to update FMVSS 101.

#### *A. Need To Standardize Identifying Symbols for Additional Controls and Displays*

First, we tentatively conclude that requiring vehicle controls and displays to be consistently identified by means of an internationally recognized set of graphics in all vehicles would promote safety. This is particularly important as the controls and displays in vehicles increase in number and complexity.

The consistent use in all new motor vehicles of a single symbol for each function would increase the recognition

of that function among all drivers. Moreover, the internationally recognized symbols are independent of any particular language. In addition, using an established set of symbols also used in other areas enhances their recognition.

The foregoing considerations have led us to propose the use of a graphic symbol set established by the International Standards Organization (ISO) specifically for controls and displays in motor vehicles, ISO 2575:2000. The ISO symbol set has existed for many years. The great majority of vehicles manufactured for sale in the U.S. already use many of these symbols. As a result, U.S. drivers have become familiar with many of them through exposure in their current vehicles.

We believe that, for all vehicles sold today, the vehicle owner's manual lists the symbols used in the vehicle and explains their meanings. To test this belief, NHTSA staff randomly selected owner's manuals for 12 different vehicles. All of the vehicles used some ISO symbols. In all cases, the manuals provided complete explanations of all symbols used in the vehicle, including their definition and the function or condition they represented. Therefore, an explicit requirement that manufacturers list such information in their vehicles' owners' manuals appears unnecessary.

We recognize that some vehicle functions are easily represented by a symbol, such as the horn, while others may be more difficult to convey graphically. Nonetheless, the consistent and widespread use of even the less intuitive symbols generates understanding of their meanings.

We note that an SAE report from the early 1980s, "Investigation Into the Identification and Interpretation of Automotive Indicators and Controls," showed that U.S. drivers generally failed to recognize the ISO brake malfunction symbol, a graphic representation of a brake drum and shoes with an exclamation point in the center. In general, the word "BRAKE" better communicated a brake malfunction. In the twenty-plus years since that report, many manufacturers have used the ISO symbols for parking brake, brake lining wear, ABS, and brake malfunction in U.S. vehicles (accompanied by the English word, where required), so that U.S. drivers are much more exposed to the graphic of the brake drum and shoes than they were in the past. We believe that the proposed five-year phase-in of the ISO brake symbol proposed here, during which the word "BRAKE" must appear

<sup>2</sup> The initiative was intended in part to eliminate duplicative and unnecessary agency rules and regulations in addition to streamlining existing regulations that remain useful and relevant.

<sup>3</sup> The agency notes, in retrospect, that while only some controls and displays are for safety functions like brakes or vehicle speed, one of the purposes of FMVSS 101 is to reduce the amount of time that a driver's attention is diverted from the driving task while he or she attempts to locate, correctly identify and correctly operate the desired control or display. In that sense, all controls and displays are related to vehicle safety.