

NHTSA moves ahead on backup-camera regulation

[Gabe Nelson](#) Automotive News January 2, 2014 - 11:18 am ET



WASHINGTON -- After several delays, the Obama administration is reviewing a revised rule that could push automakers to install backup cameras in more of their cars and trucks.

The reworked regulation, submitted to the White House on Dec. 25, would set new rear visibility standards for light vehicles sold in the United States, according to a White House database that tracks the rulemaking process. The standards are aimed at keeping

children from being run over and killed by vehicles moving in reverse.

No details on the plan, submitted by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, were made available.

Depending on the strictness of the final rules, automakers might decide to install backup cameras in all of their models. The standards may also allow automakers to comply by making less costly changes -- for example, by redesigning a car's mirrors to reduce the odds that a child behind the rear bumper will go undetected.

The notice says the administration intends to release the final rule by January 2015, as former Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood said before he left the agency last year.

But that's not soon enough to satisfy auto safety advocates, who have protested the Obama administration's pace in implementing the Cameron Gulbransen Kids Transportation Safety Act, signed into law by President George W. Bush in 2008.

Several delays

NHTSA has delayed its release of a final rule four times: first to Dec. 31, 2011, then to Feb. 29, 2012, to Dec. 31, 2012, and to Jan. 2, 2015. Congressional backers of the bill blame the delays on White House resistance to NHTSA's original proposal.

That proposal, released in 2010, would have required all new light vehicles to be sold with backup cameras by 2014.

NHTSA said that adding a backup camera to a vehicle would cost \$58 to \$203, but an industry-wide shift would save 95 to 112 lives per year.

Backup cameras have become more common since then, as consumers have started to demand the technology and more vehicles have been sold with big navigation screens that can easily display the video feed from a backup camera.

Standard equipment?

Some automakers have raced to adopt the feature. Honda says that with the launch of the 2015 Honda Fit, its entire U.S. lineup will come standard with backup cameras.

But many models lack backup cameras. Public interest groups such as Consumers Union, the advocacy wing of *Consumer Reports* magazine, filed a lawsuit in September with the goal of compelling the Obama administration to make them a standard feature across the U.S. fleet.

"When Congress ordered this rule issued in three years, they meant three years, not seven," Scott Michelman, an attorney at the group Public Citizen, said at the time.

NHTSA has given no indication of whether its plan for satisfying Congress' orders has changed. But there are indications that the administration may not mandate backup cameras in all new light vehicles -- an idea the auto industry has protested.

According to the notice on the White House database, the 2008 law does not require a backup camera in every car, but rather can be satisfied with "additional mirrors, sensors, cameras or other technology to expand the driver's field of view."

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