

Comments on Ford's Recent Announcement Regarding "Shields"

Recently, Ford has suggested modifications that need to be made to the CVPI in order to make the fuel tank less likely to be punctured during a crash. We applaud Ford for noting that there are fuel tank integrity issues when a CVPI is involved in a high-speed crash. We further applaud Ford for recognizing that something must be done to make the CVPI the safest possible vehicle in order to protect our nation's law enforcement professionals, who spend much of their time inside the CVPI.

As we understand Ford's proposal, they will make available to Police Departments a series of approximately five shields, to be mounted at various locations about the perimeter of the CVPI fuel tank. The premise being that, in the event of a crash, these shields will protect the integrity of the fuel tank from being compromised by these adjacent protruding or pointy objects. We assume the premise is: if we keep the fuel in the tank, we can't have a fire.

We believe that the shields are a step in the right direction; however, we don't feel they go far enough. For example, in the event of a severe rear end crash, there are an almost infinite number of metal components that might puncture or tear at the fuel tank. There is also the potential in a severe crash that the fuel tank itself will be driven into the rear axle with such force that it will deform, suffer a loss of integrity, and allow fuel to leak. These events might cause the fuel tank to lose fuel. Metal can spark and become an ignition source and create a significant fire potential. Should a fuel leak occur, shields will do nothing to prevent the fuel from igniting or to suppress a fire should it start. Only the FIRE Panel has the possibility of addressing these issues!

To have a chance at preventing a fire from occurring, we need to either maintain the fuel inside the tank, under any and all circumstances, and/or we need to prevent any leaking fuel from igniting. To the best of our knowledge, the only two devices that might accomplish these goals are a bladder in the tank and the FIRE Panel on the tank. This combination is what was tested in a real world simulation of what has happened to the CVPI. The Fuel Safe bladder limited the amount of fuel that leaked from the tank to the bare minimum, and the FIRE Panel created a significant suspension of fire suppressing powder in the proximity of the fuel tank that prevented that fuel from igniting.

We again applaud Ford for offering their shields in an effort to make the CVPI safer. However, we still suggest that Police Departments should add the FIRE Panel on the fuel tank to inert the proximity of the fuel tank in the event of a crash, thereby limiting the fire potential. In addition, Police Departments have been installing Fuel Safe bladders to maintain the structural integrity of fuel tank and limit the possibility of fuel leakage.

When it comes to life safety, we should not be designing to the "minimum", we should always do the most we can to protect our law enforcement professions! The few hundred dollars that a FIRE Panel costs is a small investment to make the CVPIs safer!

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