

The Neck You Save Should Be Your Own!

In the December 2003 Victory Lane Magazine, Craig L. Hubbard, President of Vintage Automobile Racing Association, announced beginning with the 2004 season, all VARA vintage race drivers must wear at minimum a properly fitted neck collar and a closed face helmet. VARA highly recommends a head and neck restraint system. Mr. Hubbard plans to issue a statement regarding plans for the 2005 season and beyond which will require all VARA drivers to wear a full head/neck safety restraint system, such as Hutchens, D-Cel, ISAAC, Hans or Simpson.

Since the tragic loss of Dale Earnhardt, at least four other stock car drivers have perished from the result of injuries sustained in head on collisions with retaining walls, Adam Petty, Kerry Irwin, Tony Rodgers and Blaise Alexander including Dale Earnhardt. All died from basically the same neck injuries because the safety equipment on their person and in their race cars, could not adequately withstand the extraordinary forces created from the impact. None of these professional race car drivers were wearing any type of head/neck restraint system at the time of their incident.

There have been many other tragic examples of amateur and/or vintage racers meeting the same demise. Recent headlines such as the following are all too common:

“American Stockcar Challenge (ASC) driver involved in fatal incident.

Buttonwillow Raceway Park, Buttonwillow, CA
Saturday, October 15th, 2003

A tragic one-car accident during an American Stockcar Challenge (ASC) race took life a series regular, William Blauvelt of Ringwood, NJ. Early in the 30 minute timed event, Blauvelt apparently lost control of his race car and slid off course, impacting a dirt embankment. Witnesses reported that no other cars were nearby and that the incident took place at a relatively slow section of the 3 mile road course. Rescue crews arrived within seconds and immediately extracted Blauvelt. He was quickly airlifted by helicopter to Kern Medical Center where he was pronounced dead. Kern County Coroner listed the official cause of death as a closed crania cervical injury with basal skull fracture. A preliminary inspection indicated that all the safety equipment functioned properly. Blauvelt was 38 years old and is survived by his wife and their 18 month old son, Nikolas.”

Billy Blauvelt was not wearing any type of head and neck restraint system.

I do not want to be morose, but stories such as these are the reality of our sport regardless if we are professional or just weekend vintage racers. Unfortunately, I have experienced two incidents which have affected the use and range of my neck muscles. One involved launching my GP Triumph Spitfire, off the road down a 150’ ravine during a SCCA Solo I Hillclimb event. The other was as a passenger in a 50 MPH side impact collision on a public road. After years of therapy and neck braces, doctors have advised the existing muscle damage can not be reversed. Their advice: minimize exposure, as much as realistically possible, to further damage/injury.

I wear a Hutchens device when I participate in any vintage racing event. I firmly believe anyone with an ounce of sense, and a loving family, needs to wear some type of head/neck restraint device to reduce the possibility of serious injury in the event of frontal or angular impact during a race event.

Not being a qualified safety engineer, nor having the luxury of unlimited editorial space in this newsletter, I strongly recommend each of you, with any interest in this subject, spend some valuable time reading the following articles on subject. Each of them present both a strong technical and emotional justification for spending whatever your pocketbook can afford for that extra measure of safety a good quality head and neck restraint system offers.

Three Interesting Articles to Review:

Go to: www.hutchensdevice.com website

Go to: "News"

Go to: "Head and Neck Restraints" by Trevor Ashline

Then go to www.circletrack.com on same site and read: "Head and Neck Restraints – If you Race A Car, Wear One of These Life Saving Devices", by Ron Lemasters, Jr. Review at the end of this article a sidebar entitled "Drilling Your Helmet: The Risks".

Lastly, pick up a copy of March 2004 SCCA Sportscar magazine and read the article "Head and Neck Restraint Systems Reduce Crash Injuries" by Rocky Entriiken.

Visit the more popular head and neck restraint systems manufacturer web sites:

<u>Manufacturer</u>	<u>System</u>	<u>MSRP Price</u>	<u>Website</u>
Safety Solutions, Inc.	Hutchens Device	\$325.00	www.hutchensdevice.com
Isaac LLC	Isaac System	\$725.00	www.isaacdirect.com
Simpson Performance (A version of Safety Solutions' D-Cell Unit)	Simpson System	\$450.00	www.simpsonraceproducts.com
Safety Solutions, Inc.	D-Cell Harness	\$425.00	www.hutchensdevice.com
Hubbard/Downing Inc.	Hans Model 20	\$865.00	www.hansdevice.com
G-Force Racing Gear	G-Force SRS-1*	\$280.00	www.gforce.com

* (Sold only for use with current G-Force helmets.)

The Safety Solution Hutchens Device and D-Cell are available from Purple Patch Motorsports, an authorized Safety Solution dealer, Roswell, GA at www.purplepatchmotorsports.com. Or, call toll free, 866-872-4365 for information or special member pricing.

Final Remarks: Extensive testing by all major professional racing authorizations have proven that any impact with a minimum of 20 degrees frontal impact above 30 MPH will "most likely" result in a basilar skull fracture which normally results in immediate death.

Before you rebuild that engine or transmission, buy a new set of tires, upgrade the car hauler or trade up for a more luxurious RV, invest in a head and neck restraint system. Your family would appreciate it!