

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JOHN McCAIN
CHAIRMAN, SENATE COMMITTEE ON
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION
FULL COMMITTEE HEARING ON THE SAFETY OF SPORT UTILITY VEHICLES
FEBRUARY 26, 2003

- The purpose of today's hearing is to gain a better understanding of various safety issues associated with sport utility vehicles, or SUVs, and other light trucks. As we all know, SUVs are extremely popular among consumers, yet they have received significant criticism for being more dangerous than other vehicles on the road.
- Statistically, SUVs have a higher rate of vehicle rollover than passenger vehicles. Recent comments by Dr. Jeffrey Runge, Administrator for the National High Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) gained attention when he expressed concerns about SUV safety, and serious reservations about his family members driving some of them. Dr. Runge's views, in his capacity as NHTSA Administrator, coupled with the data provided by his agency, merit a comprehensive review by this Committee.
- Let me be clear. This hearing is not intended to vilify auto manufacturers or the SUVs that they produce. Nor is this hearing meant to blindly defend the SUV as a vehicle that is more or less safe than passenger cars. Rather, the purpose of this hearing is to examine the incidence of death, injury, and rollover when SUVs are involved in vehicle crashes.
- I am a strong believer in the free market, and consider consumer choice to be a fundamental component of a healthy economy and society. Consumer choice should be based on sound information, much of which, in this case, is provided by those who will testify today. The Committee will be very interested to learn about the efforts under way to develop safer vehicles, as well as to help educate the public and share existing information needed to make informed choices. We also will be interested to learn whether any safety issues that may exist concerning SUVs can be resolved voluntarily by automobile manufactures, or whether uniform federal safety standards are necessary.
- Finally, it is important to recognize that over the years the automotive industry has made strides in improving vehicle safety. I hope to hear from our witnesses regarding what technologies currently exist that could further mitigate the safety risks that may be associated with SUVs.
- I thank the witnesses for appearing before the Committee and look forward to their testimony today.