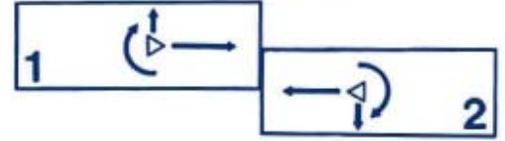


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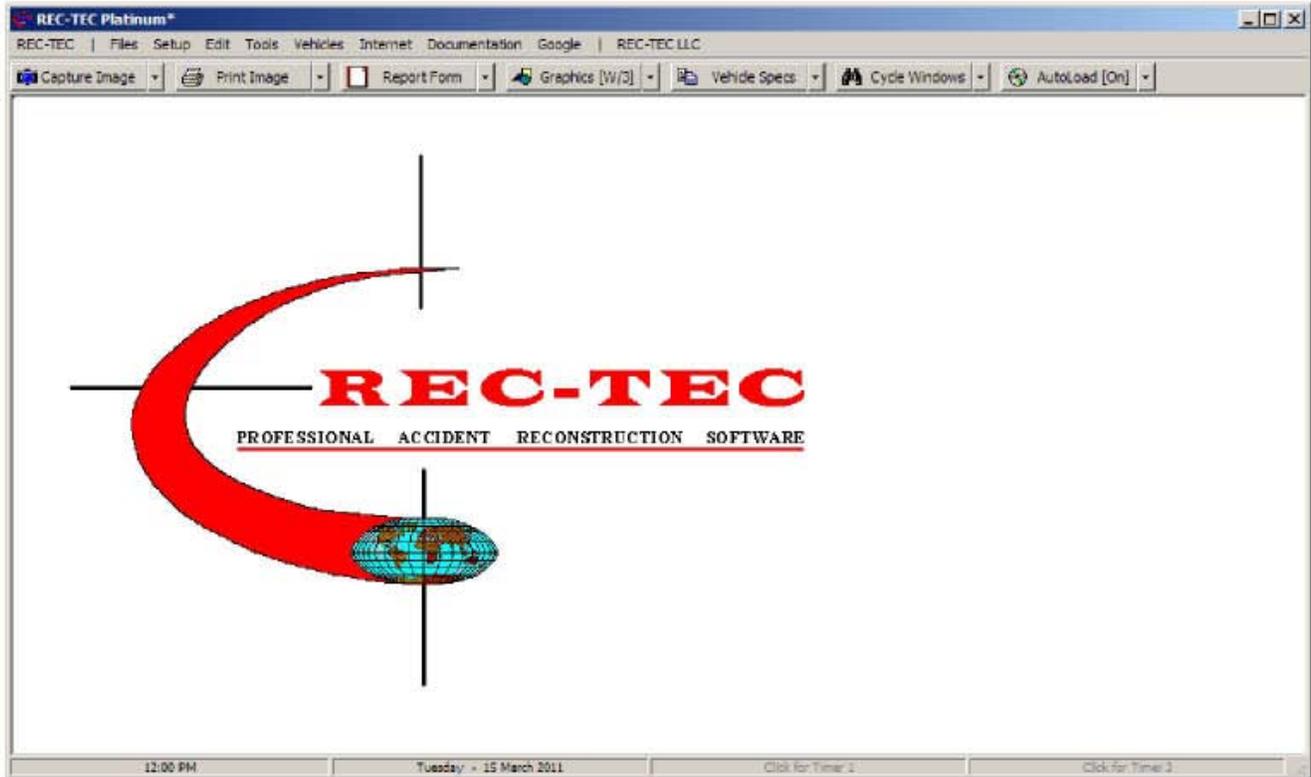
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INSIDE: *Visual Demand of Curves/Fog-Limited Sight Distance and Brake Response Time
Crashworthiness Testing of a Portable Maintenance Work-Zone Barrier
Calibration of Accident Modification Factors for Rural Frontage Roads
Supreme Court Ruling Opens Automakers To More Seatbelt Suits
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SUPREME COURT RULING OPENS AUTOMAKERS TO MORE SEATBELT SUITS

The U.S. Supreme Court opened the auto industry to new lawsuits over seatbelt design, ruling that Mazda Motor Corp. must defend against claims pressed by the family of a woman killed while riding in the back of a minivan.

The justices today said that automakers can be sued for not equipping seats with a shoulder strap, ruling that companies aren't immunized by a federal regulation that allowed lap-only belts in some rear seats prior to 2007. The unanimous ruling said regulators intended to set only a minimum standard.

The ruling marks a change in the law in much of the country. Every lower court to consider the issue had concluded that the federal rules preempted suits by accident victims over seatbelt design. More than 1 million cars on the road as of 2008 had at least one lap-only belt.

"This case really reaffirms the importance of state tort law in achieving greater vehicle safety," said Martin Buchanan, a San Diego lawyer for the family of Thanh Williamson, who died in the 2002 crash.

Shares in automakers plunged following the ruling. Ford Motor Co. fell 63 cents, or 4.1 percent, to \$14.60 in New York Stock Exchange composite trading. General Motors Co. fell \$1.58, or 4.4 percent, to \$34.19.

The ruling scales back a 2000 decision that said federal law insulates automakers from claims under state product-liability law that they should have moved more quickly to install air bags. Justice Sonia Sotomayor said in a concurring opinion today that lower courts had been reading too much into that ruling.

Two-point seatbelts

Under National Highway Traffic Safety Administration rules put in place in 1989, shoulder straps were required only for so-called outboard seats -- those next to a window, rather than alongside an aisle or in the center of a row. Current regulations, in effect since 2007, require new cars to have three-point belts -- a lap belt plus a shoulder strap -- in all forward-facing seats.

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P.O. Box 234, Waldorf, MD 20604
Telephone/Fax: 301/843-1371
E-mail: accidentrj@aol.com
VICTOR CRAIG - EDITOR

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