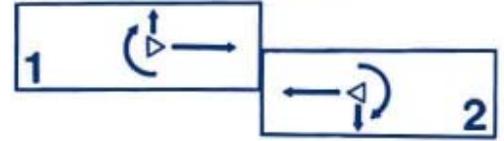
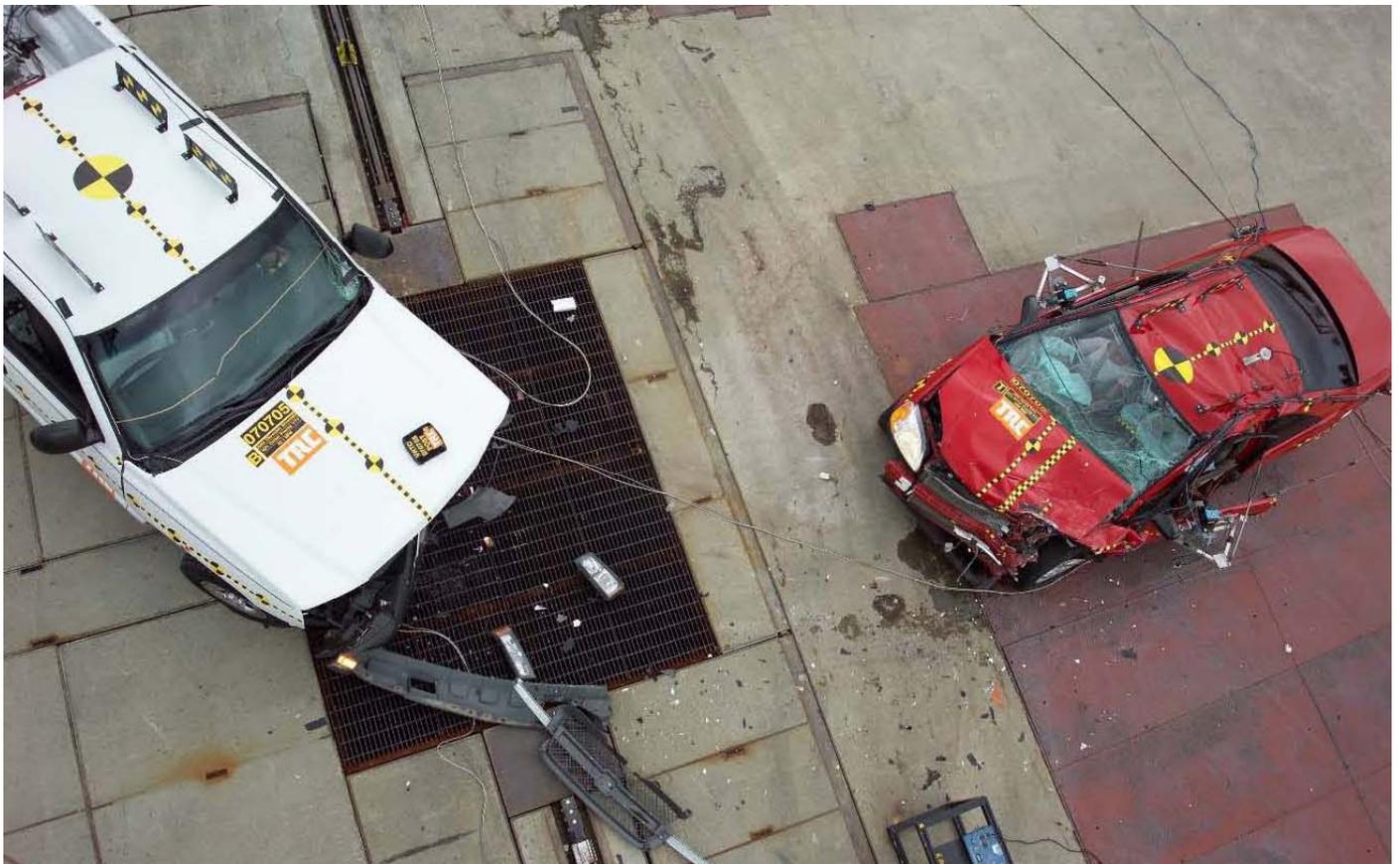


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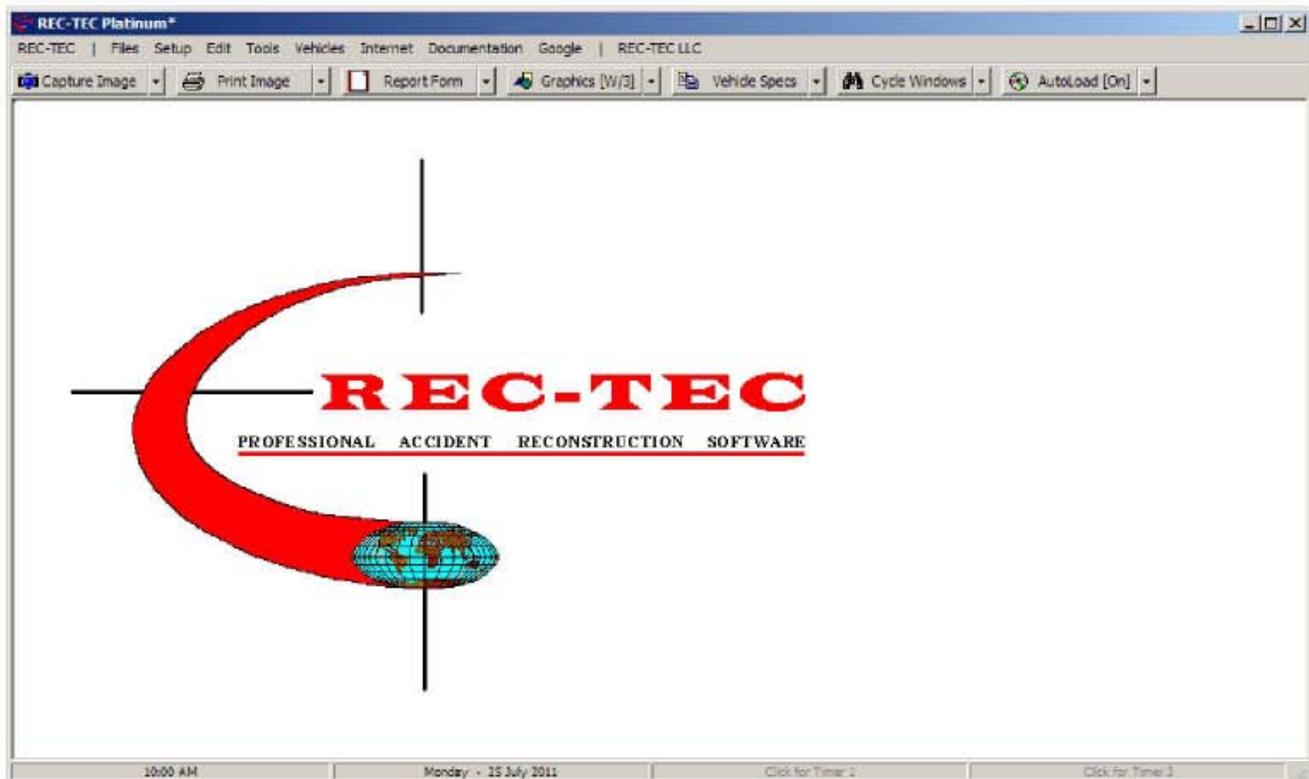
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2003 Silverado / 2001 Civic Offset Head-on at 65 mph Closing Speed
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TOYOTA TO FACE FIRST TRIAL IN UNINTENDED-ACCELERATION CASE IN 2013

Toyota Motor Corp. will face the first test trial in February 2013 of lawsuits combined in federal court that claim a defect causes the company's vehicles to speed up uncontrollably, a judge said.

U.S. District Judge James V. Selna in Santa Ana, Calif., said in a "tentative order" posted on his court's website that the first bellwether trial would be of claims by the families of two people killed in a Nov. 5, 2010, crash in Utah.

Paul Van Alfen died when his 2008 Toyota Camry crashed into a wall. A passenger, Charlene Lloyd, died of her injuries a day after the accident.

Toyota, the world's largest automaker, recalled millions of U.S. vehicles, starting in 2009, after claims of defects and incidents involving sudden unintended acceleration. The recalls set off a wave of litigation, including hundreds of economic-loss suits and claims by individuals or their families alleging injuries and deaths.

"The conduct of a trial in the first quarter of 2013 will markedly advance these proceedings," said Selna, who is overseeing most of the federal lawsuits. "Selection of a personal injury/wrongful death case" is the most likely type to "meet that goal," he said.

Selna selected the Van Alfen case from a list of six suits submitted by lawyers for the company and plaintiffs.

Overriding goal

"My overriding goal is to ensure that we try the first bellwether case in the first quarter of 2013," Selna said at a hearing recently.

Van Alfen's wife and son were injured in the 2010 crash and are suing as well. The families claim that the accident happened when the vehicle unexpectedly accelerated as Van Alfen pulled onto an exit ramp on I-80 near Wendover, Utah, and didn't stop even after he slammed on the brakes.

The plaintiffs claim that the Camry is defective and that the Toyota City, Japan-based carmaker failed to include a brake override system or fail-safe device to stop inadvertent acceleration.

Most of the federal lawsuits were combined before Selna, in a multidistrict litigation for evidence gathering and pretrial rulings.

- Bloomberg

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VICTOR CRAIG - EDITOR

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