

ESV CONFERENCE HISTORY

The United States Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), Office of Vehicle Safety Research is the official government agency responsible for the implementation of the International Technical Conferences on the Enhanced Safety of Vehicles (ESV). The Conferences are held approximately every two years and hosted by participating Governments. Delegate and attendee participation includes worldwide governments, automotive industries, motor vehicle research engineers and scientists; medical, insurance, and legal professions; consumers; academia; private corporations; and international media.

The ESV Program originated in 1970 under the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Committee on the Challenges of Modern Society, and was implemented through bilateral agreements between the governments of the United States, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, Japan, and Sweden. The participating nations agreed to develop experimental safety vehicles to advance the state-of-the-art technology in automotive engineering and to meet periodically to exchange information on their progress. Since its inception the number of international partners has grown to include the governments of Canada, Australia, the Netherlands, Hungary, Poland, and two international organizations – the European Enhanced Vehicle-safety Committee, and the European Commission. A representative from each country and organization serves as a Government Focal Point in support of the Conference.

In 1971, the Conference was known as the International Experimental Safety of Vehicles Conference. Over time, the focus of the Conference shifted from concentration on the development of experimental safety vehicles to broader issues of safety and international cooperation seeking reductions in motor vehicle fatalities and injuries. These issues include program advances such as Pedestrian Safety, Frontal and Side Impact Protection, Biomechanics, Intelligent Transportation Systems, and Vehicle Compatibility. In 1991, the participating governments agreed to change the name of the Conference to “The International Technical Conference on the Enhanced Safety of Vehicles” to reflect the current focus. The 14th ESV Conference, held in Munich, Germany, May 1994, was the

first conference in which the new name was used and “25 Years of ESV Development” was celebrated.

The 15th ESV Conference, held in Melbourne, Australia, May 1996, was precedence-setting as well. A new 5-year priority research program known as International Harmonized Research Activities (IHRA) was established under the auspices of the ESV Conference. The program established six international priority research areas: Biomechanics, Advanced Offset Frontal Crash Protection, Vehicle Compatibility, Pedestrian Safety, Intelligent Transportation Systems, and recently chosen Side Impact Protection. In May of 1997, NHTSA hosted a Public Workshop to share with its partners the goals and objectives of IHRA. In November of 1997, the ESV Government Focal Points agreed that all participating governments would join in these priority research programs, and that the programs would be governed by an IHRA Steering Committee comprised mainly of the ESV Government Focal Points. Five Working Groups that now exist in each of the priority research areas are led by participating Governments and are comprised of government and industry experts. The IHRA Steering Committee consisting of Government members meets biannually to review recommendations and research plans being developed by the Working Groups.

The 18th ESV Conference hosted by Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan and Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport of Japan, held in Nagoya, Japan, May 19 – 22, 2003, was attended by delegates from twenty two (22) different countries. The IHRA program was evaluated and their vision, goals, and objectives for the future were discussed in a special IHRA Panel session. More than 240 technical papers were accepted for inclusion in the Conference Proceedings, with international authors representative of sixteen (16) different nations.

We thank our international conference participants for their continued interest, dedication, and support. The ESV Conference continues to be one of the world's foremost events in the field of motor vehicle safety research. The 19th ESV Conference will be held in Washington, D.C., United States of America, in the year 2005.