

# ROAD TO SAFETY

## Best-Kept Secret In Driving Safety? The Shock Absorber <sup>TM</sup>

(NAPSA)—If you're ever in a driving situation where sudden braking or a sharp evasive maneuver save you from a collision, perhaps you should thank your shock absorbers and/or struts for helping to ensure your safety.

That's right, shocks and struts play critical roles in your vehicle's ability to deliver precise steering response, maximum stopping power and road-holding stability in a broad range of driving situations. To the surprise of many consumers, improving passenger comfort—through the dampening of road-induced noise and vibration—is not the only role of today's shocks and struts.

"Most vehicle owners understand that tires and brakes are key to a vehicle's steering, stopping and stability, and they've traditionally associated shocks and struts with driving comfort. The truth is that tires, brakes and shocks or struts work together as a complete chassis system," said Mark Christiaanse, director of marketing-ride control for Tenneco Automotive, manufacturer of Monroe shocks and struts. "If even one shock or strut is worn, the tires and brakes may not be able to deliver the margin of safety you need in certain situations."

This chassis system is known within the automotive industry as the "Safety Triangle," a name representing not only the tires, brakes and shocks/struts but the three key safety-related handling characteristics—steering, stop-

ping and stability. Thousands of vehicle service shops now include Safety Triangle inspections as recommended safety checks.

"The inspection takes just a few minutes but it requires professional skills and equipment," Christiaanse said. "We strongly recommend that vehicle owners have a Safety Triangle inspection performed every 12,000 miles to ensure that their tires, brake system and shocks or struts are performing to the vehicle manufacturer's specifications."

The primary role of shock absorbers and struts is to hold the tires against the road. This is particularly important when a vehicle hits a bump or pothole because the impact causes the wheels to rebound away from the road surface. By absorbing the energy of these impacts, shocks and struts help minimize traction loss.

The importance of fully operable shocks and struts can be seen in the results of vehicle handling research certified by the United States Auto Club. A series of safety tests conducted with some popular U.S. automobiles showed that vehicles equipped with three new shocks and one 50 percent degraded shock required an average of four percent more time and almost six percent greater distance to brake from 60 to zero miles per hour when compared with similar vehicles with new replacement shocks. (Testing was conducted on a dry, bumpy road surface.) A popular SUV equipped with one degraded shock required nearly

10 percent more braking time (approximately 16 feet) than it did when equipped with new replacement shocks.

In an accident-avoidance test, vehicles equipped with one degraded shock were forced to travel at a four percent lower speed, on average, to safely perform a sudden evasive maneuver when compared to the same vehicles with new replacement shocks. Vehicles capable of performing this test at higher speeds have a wider "safety envelope" and are less likely to spin, lose control or exit the roadway in situations when sudden evasive action is required.

"Shocks and struts wear so gradually that most drivers don't detect the loss of functionality until they face an emergency driving situation," Christiaanse said. "The safe alternative is to have periodic Safety Triangle inspections performed on your vehicle so you can be confident that these components are working when you need them."

Tenneco Automotive has launched an international consumer education program that includes Safety Triangle inspections through more than 10,000 qualified service dealers. To find the nearest participating business, use the dealer locator feature on the company's [www.monroe.com](http://www.monroe.com) Web site. A printable Safety Triangle inspection form also is available online—through [www.safety-triangle.com](http://www.safety-triangle.com)—for consumers who prefer another local service provider.