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OTHER BUSINESS

Exchange of information on national and international requirements on primary safety

Submitted by the expert from the United Kingdom

The text reproduced below was prepared by the expert from the United Kingdom in order to solicit the views and experiences from other experts of the Working Party on Brakes and Running Gear (GRRF) regarding the operation of electric parking brakes.

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION RELATING TO THE OPERATION OF ELECTRIC PARKING BRAKES ESPECIALLY THOSE WHICH HAVE THE AUTOMATIC RELEASE FUNCTION

The United Kingdom is keen to receive any information from other Contracting Parties on the subject of electric parking brakes particularly those fitted to M₁'s.

Electrically operated parking brake systems are gradually becoming a common fitment to new cars. However, we have received some safety concerns regarding the operation of a system along with a report of an accident. It transpires that under specific circumstances the particular system in question which is equipped with an automatic application and release facility also allows the parking brake to release without the engine running.

The incident referred to above resulted from the driver using the normal routine to set off from a parked position; this involved applying the service brake to release the interlock of the automatic transmission gear selector, moving it from park position to drive and depressing the throttle - the park brake released automatically. However, as the engine was not running and the vehicle was parked on a slope it proceeded to roll away and collided with another vehicle.

Whilst it is accepted that even though the vacuum assistance may have been depleted during the service brake application, secondary brake performance should remain available and the handbrake can also be applied manually. However, the majority of drivers panic and either do not press the brake pedal with sufficient force or may not even consider manually applying the parking brake as this operation usually occurs automatically.

It is recognized that drivers also have a responsibility to carry out vehicle pre-driving checks, paying particular attention to, and acting on, any relevant warning lamps, signals, etc. to satisfy themselves that the vehicle is in an adequate condition before setting off.

The United Kingdom is in the process of investigating this issue and would be grateful for any information regarding any similar problems/accidents happening or any solutions that may have assisted to alleviate the problem; e.g. requiring an additional signal from the engine before releasing the parking brake automatically.

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