



U.S. Department  
of Transportation  
**National Highway  
Traffic Safety  
Administration**

400 Seventh St., S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20590

APR 24 2003

Michael Brooks  
Center for Auto Safety  
1825 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.  
Suite 330  
Washington, DC 20009-5708

Dear Mr. Brooks:

This is in response to your letter of October 1, requesting information on four Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS), cases, which you believed should be in FARS, but did not show up in searches. After carefully reviewing the cases you mentioned, we provide the following explanation:

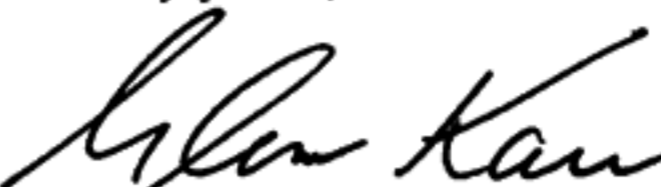

The Alabama case listed on the Police Accident Report (PAR), the officer states "collision with tree" as the first and most harmful event. He also states that the vehicle immediately burst into flames. The FARS supervisor has discussed the case with the Corporal and determined that the subsequent event (starting the car) after stopping and checking to see if the occupants were injured, started the fire. If the car had not been started, there may not have been a fire and the occupants might have survived. Thus, this FARS case (three fatalities) will be deleted from the FARS 2001 file.

In the Louisiana case, the Center for Auto Safety (CAS), cites is not in the FARS file. The Accident occurred on May 19, 1998 but the death occurred on June 30, 1998, well beyond the 30-day definition of death now standard among most data systems. The LA case is properly excluded.

The two Arizona cases, that CAS cites, one in 1998 and the other in 2001, are in the FARS files for the appropriate years and are properly coded. They both involve not-in-transport vehicles that were struck from behind and caught fire. FARS only includes a vehicle form for Motor Vehicles in Transport so there is no vehicle form in either of these cases (for the struck "vehicle") on which to record "Fire Occurrence" or a "Most Harmful Event for This Vehicle". The Most Harmful Event for the other vehicle in each case is correctly coded as "Collision with Parked Motor Vehicle" or "Collision with Other Type Non-Motorist". In the 2000 case, fire also occurred in the striking vehicle and this was recorded. CAS probably missed these cases if the search included vehicle information that was not required to be coded in these two cases.

Thank you for your inquiry of the FARS files. We trust that the above information explains the four cases, however, we are available to assist if you require further information.

Sincerely yours,

  
For  Joseph S. Carra, Director  
National Center for Statistics  
and Analysis