

## Mobility Information Sheet 11

### Airbags and Drivers with Disabilities

In a car accident a driver's head can sometimes hit the steering wheel or the front windscreen, causing serious injury or even death. An airbag is designed to inflate and cushion the head to prevent it from hitting the steering wheel.

Drivers with disabilities often use a steering attachment to assist them when turning the wheel. This can be a spinner, a peg or sometimes a three pronged grip, or can be a system used in conjunction with an infra-red device for the secondary controls.

There was some concern that if these devices are used in conjunction with an airbag, injury could be caused if the steering aid is dislodged or loosened when the airbag is inflated.

The UK's Department of Transport commissioned research at the Transport Research Laboratory to establish any problems when using airbags and steering attachments. The result of this research can be summarised as:

- **The airbags were able to inflate fully**
- **None of the steering devices were damaged, but some were pushed out of position**
- **The dummy used showed no damage to its hand or arm**
- **No hand or arm was trapped when the airbag was inflated**

The general advice seems to be that airbags are safe to use with steering attachments. However, steering attachments with a cross bar going over the steering wheel should not be used, as this can impede the airbag from fully expanding, or can be detached from the steering wheel and cause serious injury if it hits the driver on the head or abdomen.

(We are grateful to the UK Department of Transport for allowing us to reprint this information.)

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