

## Proposed Model Legislation for Excessively Raised Vehicles

In 1988, the Motor Vehicle Manufacturers Association (MVMA) recommended maximum bumper and frame heights for passenger vehicles. The same year, the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA) established a policy to encourage jurisdictions to adopt the maximum bumper heights recommended by the MVMA. Ten years later in December 1998, AAMVA assembled the Altered-Height Vehicle Working Group (“the *Working Group*”) to address safety concerns expressed by several jurisdictions about passenger vehicles equipped with aftermarket body/suspension lift kits and/or oversize replacement tires (“raised vehicles”). Modifications that result in an excessive increase in the ride height of raised vehicles may degrade braking performance, compromise fuel system integrity, create a mismatch in the geometric alignment of energy-absorbing structures, increase roll-over propensity, and change handling characteristics by altering the designed integration of original tires and steering, braking and suspension systems.

The *Working Group* that was created included members from eight jurisdictions from both Canada and the United States (BC, FL, MD, MO, NJ, ON, TX, VA) and representatives affiliated with the Specialty Equipment Market Association (SEMA), American Manufacturers Equipment Compliance Agency (AMECA), Hunter Engineering Inc. and Virginia Commonwealth University. The *Working Group* explored measures that could be taken through testing, research, literature review, and the involvement of stakeholders to develop non-binding model legislation for raised vehicles. AAMVA’s role in developing this model legislation is consistent with the mission of the Vehicle Safety & Inspection (VS&I) Discipline to promote uniform programs for compliance with accepted minimum standards for motor vehicle safety equipment.

Although the guiding principle has always been public and highway safety, there was also an interest in ensuring that the model legislation was responsible, appropriately targeted and technically-supported. To support that position, the AAMVA *Working Group* conducted low-speed brake tests to examine the effect oversize replacement tires could have on the braking performance and rollover propensity of excessively raised vehicles; perused technical literature; reviewed regulations; and petitioned comments about excessively raised vehicles from the AAMVA membership. The *Working Group* also took measures to quantify the crash risk of excessively raised vehicles and develop model legislation not in isolation, but in a collaborate effort together with organizations, manufacturers and other stakeholders with a vested interest in automotive equipment and highway safety. Those who participated in discussions to develop the model legislation were affiliated with law enforcement, motor vehicle administration, vehicle regulation, casualty insurance, and aftermarket tire and motor vehicle manufacturing industries. The efforts of the *Working Group* have been supported by AAMVA staff.

There are two aspects to the proposed model legislation which include: **(a) Excessively Raised Vehicle Safety Act**, and **(b) Regulation Concerning Excessively Raised Vehicles**. The model legislation, if adopted by a jurisdiction, would allow the original ride height on passenger vehicles to be raised to a certain extent but within specific limits. These limitations would specifically restrict the size of oversize replacement tires, maximum bumper heights and frame heights. There are also provisions within the proposed model legislation addressing modifications which could affect characteristics and maximum tolerances and dimensions of the braking, lighting, suspension, steering and fuel systems of raised vehicles. The proposed model legislation can be incorporated into a periodic inspection program or augment out-of-service criteria to assist make an objective determination about whether a raised vehicle should pass or fail a cursory roadside inspection.

In summary, the proposed model legislation is intended to assist jurisdictions who have an interest in refining current statutes or introduce new standards for regulating the excessive ride height of raised vehicles equipped with aftermarket body/suspension lift kits and/or oversize replacement tires. This proposed legislation has been reviewed and approved by the AAMVA Legal Services Discipline as required by the International Standing Committee Administrative procedures.

Jurisdictions are requested to review and submit written comments concerning the proposed model legislation to: Selden Fritschner with AAMVA ([sfritschner@aamva.org](mailto:sfritschner@aamva.org)) before April 9, 2007.