

# The Stop Underrides Act

## What is “underride”?

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“Underride” is the term used to describe a crash where a car collides with a truck and goes underneath the body of a truck. Modern car safety features are designed to ensure that a passenger can walk away from a crash where the vehicle hits a solid wall at 35 miles per hour. In an underride crash, the first part of a car coming into contact with a truck body is the windshield, and as a result, a car’s safety features are rendered useless. When a car collides with a truck, it will keep moving forward, and decapitation is a serious threat at 35 miles per hour.

An underride guard is a metal bar attached to the body of a truck that aims to prevent a car from sliding underneath the rear, front, or side of a truck. Large trucks have been federally required to have rear underride guards since 1953. The death of the well-known actress Jayne Mansfield in 1967 brought to light inadequacies in federal underride guard requirements, but there is no requirement to adequately maintain rear underride guards and they often fail. In addition, underride guards are not federally required to be on the sides or front of trucks. Hundreds of people die in underride crashes each year.

## The Stop Underrides Act

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The Stop Underrides Act would require the Department of Transportation to issue three rulemakings to:

- Strengthen the requirements for rear underride guards, add the requirement to single unit trucks (like in the photo above) and ensure that these standards are based off of crash testing
- Require all trailers, semi-trailers, and single unit trucks are equipped with side guards
- Require all trailers, semi-trailers, and single unit trucks are equipped with front guards

The bill would update the annual inspection that all motor carriers perform to include underride guards as one of the critical components of inspection, and require the DoT to review underride standards periodically to evaluate the need for changes in response to advancements in technology.

It would establish a committee to monitor the underride rulemaking process that is composed of manufacturers, road inspectors, motor vehicle engineers/technicians, motor vehicle crash reconstructionist specialists, traffic safety organizations, truck and auto insurance industry representatives, law enforcement crash investigators, emergency medical service providers, public health/injury prevention professionals, and families who have been impacted by underride crashes. The bill would also require the DoT to quarterly publish data on the victims of truck underride crashes.

## History of the Underride Problem

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- 1953** The Bureau of Motor Carriers issues the first federal underride standard
- 1969** DoT issues a proposed rulemaking that would require underride protection on all trucks and trailers
- 1977** Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) test illustrates ineffectiveness of 1953 rear underride
- 1977** Senate hearing illustrates the inadequacies of existing requirements
- 1997** Study illustrates undercounting of underride death in Fatal Accident Reporting System (FARS)
- 2009** IIHS calls for the requirement of front and side underride guards at E&C Committee hearing
- 2010** Evaluation of rear underride guards shows ineffectiveness in protecting passengers
- 2011** IIHS crash test study demonstrates underride safety standards can fail in relatively low-speed crashes
- 2013** New crash test study shows underride guards on most heavy trucks fail to prevent underride
- 2015** NTSB recommends that regulators develop performance standards for side and front underride
- 2017** IIHS tests side underride guards and impact side guards have in preventing serious injury and death
- 2018** NHTSA releases computer modeling and evaluation report by Texas A&M of side underride protective device designs