

# NEW SOUTH WALES FIRE BRIGADES SAFETY BULLETIN 2008/04 Supplementary Restraint Systems



## Issue

A fire crew in south-west Sydney recently attended a car fire where there were several explosions. These propelled large pieces of glass from the windscreen up to 25 metres. It was discovered that the largest explosion was caused by a high-pressure airbag deployment canister in the dashboard which had ruptured as a result of the fire.

Airbags and other components of Supplementary Restraint Systems (SRSs) are a hazard in vehicle fires as well as vehicle rescues.

## What hazards can SRSs create at a vehicle fire or rescue?

- Gases under high pressure are stored in steel cylinders that may be cut by rescuers or rupture in a fire.
- Explosive gases and chemicals may be present.
- Un-deployed airbags and roll over protection systems can cause serious injury or death if the rescuer is working within the deployment zone at the time of an unwanted deployment.
- Unwanted deployment will result in 170 to 180 dB noise levels.
- Deployed and exposed airbag modules can be extremely hot.

Remember there are many other automotive devices that contain gases or liquids under pressure, including gas struts, shock absorbers, drive shafts, and pneumatic tyres. These devices can react violently in a fire.

## Control Measures

All NSWFB personnel must apply safe working practices using risk management principles when working at vehicle fires and rescues.

Don't delay the rescue or firefighting task. Adopt a safe approach and minimise exposure to the hazards. A quick attack on a fire may prevent the SRS devices becoming involved.

Look for indications that SRSs are present and communicate this to all personnel.

Further information on SRSs can be found on the [Lessons Learned Centre](#) intranet site.

Noted, Station Commander	A	B	C	D	Other

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Contact Officer:	File Number	Date
Deputy Manager Rescue/USAR SO Clayton Abel, (02) 9742 7175	CHO/06178	16 April 2008

Previous Safety Bulletin: 2008/03 – Conducting a rescue in, on or near water