

When Everyone Is Responsible For His or Her Actions, The World Is A Safer Place

By Christopher Russell

Back in 1965 when we used to ride in cars with no airbags or even seatbelts (hard to believe such a thing took place but my family drove around town in such a death trap when I was a kid so I had first-hand experience) and the esthetics of having cool, sharp metal lines within the interior design of cars outweighed any safety concerns, it is no wonder that 4 times as many people died in automobile collisions in 1965 as they did in 2011, which is the latest year where a fatality report was issued by the National Highway Safety Traffic Administration.

Ralph Nader's 1965 book *Unsafe at Any Speed: The Designed-In Dangers of the American Automobile* <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unsafe_at_Any_Speed> brought the issue of consumer safety to national public awareness. In it he describes the reluctance of auto manufacturers to build in safety features, such as seat belts, in order for them to maximize profits.

Prior to that book coming out, car manufacturers were not being held responsible for their actions and as a result many people were being killed and/or injured as a result of decisions that were being made that favored profits over the health of the driving public. After that book came out, product liability lawsuits quadrupled to where now not only do we now have seatbelts in cars but also now we have airbags (manufacturers fought the mandatory nature of that safety device tooth and nail as well) and safely designed interiors because the car manufacturers now know they will be held responsible for their actions.

As I was driving to work the other day, I saw a Hispanic worker (where would Southern California be without Hispanic workers?) up on a roof 30 feet above the ground laying out tile on the roof. My first thought was how dangerous that was and how easy it would be for him to fall off the roof and be killed or sustain massive injuries. I then thought there should be some type of safety device to help him from falling. As I rounded the corner, I then saw that in fact he was tethered to the roof by a safety line. A smile came across my face when I saw that tether line because I knew that as a result of the actions of thousands of my fellow Trial Attorneys who tangle and have tangled with corporate America on a daily basis over the last 40 years, our world has become a much safer place than the world we lived in 1965 because there has been some semblance of balance brought to our society between making profits and protecting the public.

As much as I get pleasure from making an insurance company or car manufacturer pay for the harms caused to my clients, I get more satisfaction from seeing safety devices, such as that tether, that are intended to protect our family, friends and neighbors from being needlessly killed or injured. That satisfaction is derived from knowing what I do on a daily basis makes this world a safer place.

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