



The U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration last week finalised Federal standards that will require all new vehicles under 10,000 pounds (4,535 kg) to have enhanced rearward visibility by mid-2018. Safety advocates, who have been upset with automakers for withholding rear cameras as high-price options and with NHTSA for repeated delays in enacting the requirement, are praising the finalised rule.

The requirement will be phased in over several years' time, starting in 2016. That means the rear-view camera, increasingly popular in luxury cars and high-end trim packages, will progressively become standard equipment across all vehicle segments. The rules don't explicitly require drivers to be able to see a 3- by 6-metre zone behind a vehicle, and at this time a camera system seems to be the only way for automakers to provide the required visual field while meeting additional requirements for characteristics such as image size.

NHTSA estimates a full system including a camera and a display screen will cost \$132 to \$142 per vehicle for the 2018 model year, while installing a camera in a vehicle already equipped with a suitable display screen would cost \$43 to \$45. Because an estimated 73 percent of the new-vehicle fleet would have rearview cameras by 2018, regardless of the standards, NHTSA estimates the total cost of its rule at \$546m to \$640m in that same year.

Back-over accidents kill an estimated 210 people in the United States each year and cause another 15,000 injuries, NHTSA says, and they predict that reverse cameras -- including the ones not required under the latest rule -- will save 58 to 69 lives per year once the mandate is in full effect.