



SAFETY BULLETIN

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VEHICLE AIR BAG HAZARDS

After extinguishing a car fire (2002 Mercedes-Benz), a firefighter was knocked unconscious and another dazed when the vehicle air bags deployed and struck each on their head. Both firefighters may have been killed had they not been wearing helmets.

When vehicles crash and the air bags have not already deployed, there is a possibility they may still deploy without notice. Over thirty recently documented cases involving late air bag deployment have demonstrated the dangers of air bags. In these incidents, drivers or rescue workers have been seriously injured or, in some cases, killed. Patrol personnel responding to vehicle collisions need to consider the following factors before approaching a traffic collision:

- air bags may deploy after an accident
- small explosive devices are used to activate many safety features
- pre-tensioning seat belts are activated with a charge of gunpowder
- small explosive charges are used to deploy retractable roll bars in some convertibles
- metal detonators are used to inflate side curtain air bags
- air bags that can fire twice are often located in doors or roofs
- air bags can be located in many different locations such as roofs, dashboards, door posts and seats.

Public, officer and victim safety need to be considered at all times when approaching a vehicle that has been involved in an accident. As one expert profoundly stated, "Cars today are a loaded bomb waiting to try to hurt us as responders."



The 2002 model-year BMW 745i or 745iL sedan can be equipped with a total of 12 separate airbag systems.



Undeployed Passenger Side Air Bags Are Serious Threats.