

Testimony of Heidi Crow- Michael  
Mother of J.T. Crow  
before the  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing and Trade  
On  
“Oversight of the Consumer Product Safety Commission”  
May 19, 2015

Good Morning, My name is Heidi Crow-Michael. I would like to thank you all for allowing me to speak today on behalf of my son, J.T. Crow.

I play many roles in life; I am a homemaker and an advocate, but most importantly a mother to five children.

JT Crow is my second child, and first born son, he was a happy and extraordinary 9-year-old boy. At school, he was a straight ‘A’ student, with perfect attendance. He loved science and learning about birds and butterflies. J.T. also loved being outside playing sports like soccer and football.

J.T.’s life was cut short when he went for a ride in a 2007 Yamaha Rhino 450. While riding at a slow speed around a slight curve, the ROV suddenly and inexplicably rolled over. Though J.T. was wearing a safety belt, he was thrown from the Rhino ROV and then crushed by the half-ton vehicle as it rolled over.

Paramedics rushed J.T. to the emergency room but he had sustained more injuries than his young body could handle. My son died that day when he was 9 years old and my life was forever changed. On a daily basis I live with the pain of the tragedy that struck my family and the fear of knowing that it could happen to other families. This fear has led me to become an advocate for ROV safety and industry reform. I have been given the opportunity to use my son’s life to make a difference, a difference that can save lives.

As we sit here this morning, the ROV industry is one that sets its own safety standards and makes its own rules and innocent people are paying the price. I am not against ROVs; I just want

safe ROVs. Many consumers buy ROVs because they have four wheels and sometimes seatbelts, rollbars and roofs and look safer than ATVs. But ROVs are not safe. And it has been many years, and every year, every day, that there is not a better solution implemented for ROV safety, is a day that more people, more children, our children are put at risk.

As we reported in the [Citizen Report on Utility Terrain Vehicle \(UTV\) Hazards and Urgent Need to Improve Safety and Performance Standards](#); February 26, 2009, There is a vital need for ROV manufacturers, their trade group, the Recreational Off Highway Vehicle Association (“ROHVA”), the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (“NHTSA”) and the Consumer Product Safety Commission (“CPSC”) to adopt rigorous minimum ROV safety standards and performance standards, including minimum occupant containment, stability, and seat belt standards. When we wrote the report, we were hopeful our recommendations for safer ROVs would become standard. We asked for action and nothing happened.

An already unacceptably high casualty rate will continue unless action is taken. In 2014, ROV use resulted in at least 61 deaths and 8 more in 2015. While less stringent than the recommended safety measures in the Citizen Report, the CPSC has proposed standards that would significantly improve ROV safety. If the ROV industry really wants to protect their consumers, why wouldn’t they want to make the safest product possible? Why wouldn’t they want to do all they could to protect the people who purchased their vehicles?

I have been given the opportunity to speak to many families, and we all share a common bond, we have lost someone we love in an ROV rollover accident. Perhaps the most painful part of my role as an advocate for this cause is hearing the heart wrenching stories from those families. I know that I am not alone in asking this Committee to allow the CPSC to move forward with its rulemaking to issue ROV safety standards and to stop the senseless death of our loved ones.

In my journey over the last eight years I have collected the names, and stories of those who shared a fate similar to JT’s, it is for them that I speak today.

For:

Ellie Sand, Age 10

Kristin Lake, Age 11

Dusty Lockabey, Age 14

Ashlyn Vargas, Age 12

Dani Bernard, Age 18

Stephanie Katin, Age 26

Whitney Bland, Age 13

Sydney Anderson, Age 10

Abbey West, Age 13

Karen Harwood, Age 46

Andrea Hayes, Age 16

Mikhail Ayrepetyan, Age 56

Lane McCloud, Age 8

Andrew Bahl, Age 3

Lauren Dilworth, Age 11

Emily Bates, Age 11

Cathy Piekarczyk, Age 51

James Spencer, Age 13

Andrea Jones, Age 34 (Mother of 2)

Lindsey Quimby, Age 29

Emily King, Age 20

Cheyenne Ellis, Age 12

Eddie Ray, Age 13

David Morgan, Age 21

Josh Davis, Age 14

All killed in rollover accidents involving the Yamaha Rhino, and the injured

Dwight Grimes (Leg Destroyed)

Sunny Chism (Lost Arm)

Our stories did not begin and end on the day our loved ones were killed or injured. This battle is ongoing for all of us. We will miss soccer games, dance recitals, graduations, birthdays, weddings, and holiday celebrations. We will live with the consequence forever. Today you have the opportunity, and I think, the obligation, to help me honor these young lives, their families, and the life of my son, J.T. Crow, but it is more than that, you have an opportunity to become a part of their story, the part that offers hope for the future by bringing about change. Our request

is simply common sense: it is unimaginable that anyone would feel differently. If you don't do something about it, can you live with yourself? Delay is a problem. Delay puts our children at risk and it has been too many years and too many tragedies already. We urge you not to contribute to any further delay.

Thank you for your time.

## J.T. Crow, age 9, killed by Yamaha Rhino tipover, died on 6/22/07

Parent Contact:  
Heidi Crow  
(903) 767-6009  
(903) 629-2200  
hcrow@jtcrow.net



# Ellie Sand, age 10, killed by Yamaha Rhino tipover, died on 10/28/07

Parent Contact:  
Tammie, John Sand  
(513) 206-5556  
johnsand@mac.com



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# Kristin Lake, age 11, killed by Yamaha Rhino tipover, died on 5/29/06

Parent Contact:  
Cindy Schnittker  
(269) 795-1013  
cindyschnittker@yahoo.com



# Dusty Lockabey, age 14, killed by Yamaha Rhino tipover, died on 8/07/07

Contact care of  
Fabrice Vincent,  
Lief, Cabraser, Heimann & Bernstein, LLP  
(800) 541-7358  
fvincent@lchb.com





**Ashlyn Vargas, age 12, killed by  
Yamaha Rhino tipover, died on 11/29/07**

Parent Contact:  
Primo Vargas  
Michelle  
(805) 674-5525  
grmsinkers@yahoo.com



**Dani Bernard, age 18, killed by Yamaha  
Rhino tipover, died on 11/26/06**

Parent Contact:  
Bob Berends  
(949) 373-1619  
(949) 422-3696  
bob@berendslawfirm.com



# Stephanie Katin, age 26, killed by Yamaha Rhino tipover, died on 2/23/08

Contact care of  
Fabrice Vincent,  
Lief, Cabraser,  
Heimann & Bernstein,  
LLP  
(800) 541-7358  
fvincen@lchb.com



# Whitney Bland, age 13, killed by Yamaha Rhino tipover, died on 5/22/07

Parent Contact:  
Toni Chapman  
(337) 217-8032  
toni@camtel.net





**Sydney Anderson, age 10, killed by  
Yamaha Rhino tipover, died on 11/22/06**

Parent Contact:  
Jennie Anderson  
(269) 623-4272  
janderson@mei.net



**Abbey West, age 13, killed by Yamaha  
Rhino tipover, died on 11/23/06**

Parent Contact:  
Jeff, Tracy West  
(760) 355-1081  
jmbint1@yahoo.com



**Karen Harwood, age 46, killed by  
Yamaha Rhino tipover, died on 9/10/05**



**Andrew Bahl, age 3, killed by Yamaha  
Rhino tipover, died on 8/24/08**

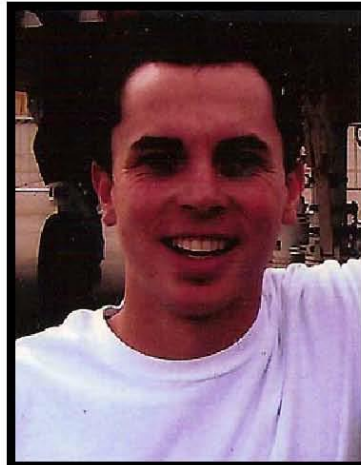
Parent Contact



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**David Morgan, age 21, killed by  
Yamaha Rhino tipover, died on 2/22/08**

Parent Contact



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**Lauren Dilworth, age 11, killed by  
Yamaha Rhino tipover, died on 10/18/08**

Parent Contact:



# Emily Bates, age 11, killed by Yamaha Rhino tipover, died on 10/18/08

Parent Contact:





# Emily King, age 20, killed by Yamaha Rhino tipover, died on 4/14/07

Parent Contact:



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# Eddie Ray, age 13, killed by Yamaha Rhino tipover, died on 9/13/07

Parent Contact:

