



Safety Committee Memo April 2009

To all Event Chairpersons and Safety Stewards:

The 2009 competition season is well underway and we wish everyone a safe and successful year. Some of the discussions from the national convention earlier this year in Las Vegas lead to this memo. Several topics of concern were heard in the town hall discussions, specifically that the course speed has continued to creep upward in addition to other items expressed from the SCCA Board of Directors. Our program is NOT in any trouble, and by taking the usual proactive actions, we want to keep it that way.

The concept of safety was built into the rules as they were developed. All events are required to follow not only the safety sections of the rulebook (those are the required articles listed in Article 4), but use common sense as well. For the past several years, the safety committee and RallyCross Board have noticed the discussions of events and courses have changed from that of challenge to speed. Describing a course by stating its top speed is certainly one way to look at the challenge, but perhaps it is not the best. Many years ago, one safety committee member ran an event that had a course length of about a mile. He finished the course sweating even though the air temperature was just above freezing. The reason was the design. There was never a portion where the steering wheel was not moving one direction or the other. It was comfortable in 2nd gear, mid-range which translates to lots of torque and a moderate speed. The 'grin' factor was very high. Average speed was something like 35-40 for the entire course. This is the type of challenge we would like to put out to the community...to design courses that challenge the driver's ability while taking advantage of the car prep. Can you do it?

Safety Stewards and Competition

As you all know, the Safety Steward for an event may compete. However, this is allowed ONLY if there is another licensed RallyCross Safety Steward at the event that is NOT competing at the same time/run group. This allows a dedicated set of eyes on the course. In this situation, BOTH safety stewards must realize that their primary focus is event safety. Their competition is secondary. Without a dedicated person responsible for event safety, our risk goes up considerably. Therefore, please realize what your duties really are the day of an event. See the next section for more information regarding risk.

Risk Management:

SCCA maintains a Risk Management department with the responsibility to analyze risk and mitigate items deemed to have excessive risk. The RallyCross safety rules were developed to minimize exposure to risk, to non-participants (spectators), participants (competitors and workers) and the club (both the local region and National). Compliance with the rules is required, it is NOT an option. Failure to comply with the rules will result in loss of sanction and insurance. It is the Safety Steward's responsibility to assure compliance with the safety rules, or to pull the sanction of the event. Safety Stewards DO HAVE this authority and may exercise it at any time during an event if the situation cannot be resolved. If there was a serious incident at an event and there was evidence that there was flagrant noncompliance with the safety rules, RallyCross could suffer the same fate as SCCA ProRally.

Incident Reports:

The SCCA BOD has requested that we start logging any/all incidents at all events. From the fabled 'bee sting' on the finger to something more serious, all must now have incident reports filed. It is important to develop a track record of incidents that result in no claim to the insurance company. An incident report does not always mean a medical situation. It could mean unauthorized access to the course by motocross, dirt bike or ATV riders. SCCA ProRally went through the same thing from the late 80's to the mid-90's with great success. Unfortunately, they also had some big losses. So far, our track record is excellent. Let's establish our baseline and work to maintain that record in the coming years.

Speed Creep:

It must be recognized that the RallyCross Rules clearly specifies maximum speeds allowed by course design. The rulebook states: "*Speeds on straight stretches should not normally exceed 40 mph (miles per hour) for Rally Stock category vehicles and should not normally exceed 60 mph for any vehicle. Turns should not normally allow speeds in excess of 30 mph for Rally Stock category vehicles; however, the maximum speed in turns for any vehicle should not normally exceed 40 mph*".

The use of the words "should" or "normally" (in the rules) **are not invitations to push these limits**. Not all courses and all venues will support higher speeds shown in the rules. Just because you can, doesn't mean you should. It is also not correct to assume that with enough flat ground any speed is reasonable at a RallyCross event.

From a course design standpoint, a balance is required between having too many turns, which will likely cause rutting of the surface, and too few turns, which allows for excessive speed. Furthermore, as a region becomes more established, there may be a tendency to "up the ante" at events to make them more challenging or exciting. Be advised that the challenge is among the competitors, and that the event is a test of skill, not bravery. It is imperative that the course design is appropriate for all levels of competitors in any eligible vehicle.

Waivers for everyone:

The basic rule for waivers at a RallyCross is the same as at any other SCCA event. Everybody - drivers, crew, workers, guests, anyone on site - everybody signs the waiver. There are a couple of additional items to remember. First, an SCCA member (not a weekend member) must witness each signature. Second, a parent cannot simply sign the standard waiver for a minor. An SCCA minor release and waiver must be properly completed. In most states a minor is anyone under 18 years old but there are a few exceptions. Make sure you check the law in your state.

Media safety:

In recent years we have seen a major increase in the number of photographers at SCCA events. Remember that video and still cameras are not permitted at worker stations or any other location within the course area. This includes cell phone cameras. The safety steward may grant exceptions for media relations purposes but the photographer must be accompanied by a spotter to warn of oncoming vehicles. The spotter must have no other duties. He cannot, for example, also be serving as a corner worker. Without a spotter, photographers are limited to locations outside the course area that have been approved by the safety steward for spectators.

Inspections:

At various times throughout the coming year, it is the intent of the RallyCross Board and the Safety Committee to review various programs throughout the country. These visits will not be announced in advance, but when the person is onsite, he or she will make their presence known to the chairman and Safety Steward. We will have a checklist of items to review to maintain consistency among inspections. This list will be published when completed.

A reminder: the issue of 'speed creep' is a risk that we understand and must take all necessary steps to mitigate. Please do what you can to mitigate this issue to the best of our abilities.

The RallyCross Safety Committee consists of Ken Cashion (Rocky Mountain Division), Jerry Doctor (MidWest Division), Hal Denham (NE Division) and Tom Nelson (RXB member). If you have any safety issues you wish to discuss or bring to the attention of the committee, please contact any of the members individually, or contact the SCCA National Office, Rally Department.