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## N.J. bans guardrail piece allegedly tied to deaths, joins 30 other states

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"We are requiring Trinity to provide us with a plan to re-test the device in order to make sure it meets crash test criteria," Neil Gallney, FHWA.

New Jersey joined 30 other states which banned the use of a guard rail part, because of safety questions that have been raised after 14 accidents and four deaths.

NJ DOT officials announced Friday they banned the use of the Trinity ET-Plus guard rail end terminal from use on current construction projects and maintenance work, said Stephen Schapiro, a DOT spokesman. The New Jersey Turnpike Authority also suspended use of the same guardrail pieces last week, said Thomas Feeney, a spokesman. The Authority also runs the Garden State Parkway.

Safety concerns about the guardrail end were raised in a **New York Times article in October about other states banning the part**. When struck head-on by a vehicle, the Trinity end allows long guardrail beams to impale a vehicle instead of pushing away from the vehicle.

Generic photo of guardrails on the Garden State Parkway, The New Jersey Turnpike Authority, which runs the Parkway, and the state DOT joined other states banning a guardrail end due to safety concerns. nj.com file photo

The NJDOT joins 30 other states which have banned use of the guardrail end terminals made by Trinity Highway Products, pending additional testing by federal agencies. Ohio became the latest state to ban use of the guardrail ends on Tuesday until crash tests are conducted.

"The department will continue to work with the Federal Highway Administration on this issue," Schapiro said. "The NJDOT's top priority is the safety of motorists on our highways."

Lawsuits contend the guardrails are to blame for five deaths, and many more injuries, in at least 14 accidents nationwide, the Times report said.

FHWA officials wrote to Trinity on Oct. 21, telling them the guardrail ends need to be crash tested again, said Neil Gallney, an FHWA spokesman. The FHWA also told Trinity it wants agency officials on site for the tests.

"We are requiring Trinity to provide us with a plan to re-test the device in order to make sure it meets crash test criteria as it has in the past," Gallney said. "Trinity provided us with that plan on October 31 and we are in the process of reviewing it."

An October 10 FHWA memo said that agency was working with the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials and the Transportation Research Board to "develop and conduct a comprehensive evaluation of different categories of roadside safety hardware end treatments."

The FHWA backed off support for the Trinity product in September after the Times wrote that a senior FHWA engineer had expressed reservations two years earlier about the safety of the redesigned guard rail end, before signing off on its use.

An FHWA July 2014 memo said that Trinity confirmed that the change was a "design detail inadvertently omitted from documentation" submitted to the agency. The memo said that the guardrail ends with the design change were crash tested in May 2005 at the Texas Transportation Institute. The FHWA said it wants the re-tests done at another accredited national test facility other than the TTI.

A Trinity spokesman told the Times in October they had confidence in the integrity of the product.

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