

## NICOLE NASON STEPPING DOWN IN AUGUST

WASHINGTON (AP) \_ President Bush's highway safety chief is resigning after leading the administration's efforts on auto safety and vehicle fuel economy standards for two years, officials said Tuesday. Nicole Nason, the administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, told Transportation Secretary Mary Peters and colleagues Tuesday that she plans to leave the agency in August, transportation officials said.

Nason, who has led NHTSA since May 2006, promoted advanced safety technology and helped shape a proposal to increase gas mileage rules in response to an energy law requiring new cars and trucks to reach a fleetwide average of at least 35 miles per gallon by 2020.

Under her watch, NHTSA required automakers to install anti-rollover technology called electronic stability control on all new vehicles by the 2012 model year. The agency also required vehicles to provide head protection in dangerous side-impact crashes and recently upgraded the consumer crash test program for new cars and trucks.

Nason, 37, the mother of two daughters who gave birth to a boy in February, was credited by auto industry officials with improving parents' understanding of child car seats and pushing for new technology to reduce drunken driving.

"She can be proud of what she did in the short time she was there," said Adrian Lund, president of the Virginia-based Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.

Several consumer groups have criticized the Bush administration's gas mileage proposal as insufficient given record-high gas prices. Others accused NHTSA of failing to push the auto industry to build safer vehicles.

Joan Claybrook, the president of the watchdog group Public Citizen and a former NHTSA administrator, said the agency has yet to improve requirements and testing standards for vehicle roof strength and adopt rules to protect passengers from being ejected from cars.