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Quotes from the article:

Drivers test skills during skids

by Tim Harrington

It's called the Skidcar, and it allows drivers to simulate loss-of-traction situations that normally only occur at life-threatening speeds.

It looks like a squad car with training wheels - and it's a blast to drive.

Which wheels are raised and by how much is controlled from a small, keypad terminal in the front seat. The raising of the car makes it "ride-slick", simulating high-speed turns, slippery road conditions or blown out tires, all at about 10 mph.

"It enables us to put the driver in situations where it's very easy for him to fail," Pitarresi said. "People always blame the road conditions - 'the road was slick or the snow made the car skid.' Snow doesn't drive cars. With this, they can learn what they do incorrectly that makes the car skid."

Pitarresi said that the majority of skids are caused by small, avoidable mistakes, and drivers can overcome them with some simple but anti-intuitive techniques - such as looking out the side window as the car skids forward toward a guardrail.

"Look where you want to go, not where you're going," Pitarresi said. "It doesn't come naturally; it just takes some self-discipline."

"It's really changing out driving styles..." said Alan Minnick, Central Shenandoah Criminal Justice Training Center assistant director.

Gary Hutson, a Virginia State Trooper and driving instructor of 10 years, was among the students learning on the Skidcar Thursday. "It was absolutely fantastic...especially re-creating those front-end skids," Hutson said. "You just can't duplicate that on a regular track, at least not if you expect to come out alive."

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