

ROLL BAR REQUIREMENTS FOR DE EVENTS

Every year the question comes up from the owner of late model 911, i.e. 996/997, cabriolet as to whether an aftermarket roll bar must be fitted for Driver Education events. Since the advent of the Boxster with their fixed roll bars, the “broomstick” rule has been enforce. That is, if the helmeted driver seated in the car is lower than a line from the top of the windshield frame to the top of the roll bar, he is ok. However since the pop-up roll bars on the 996/997 cabriolets normally only activate in a rollover situation, the question is how can we determine what passes and what doesn't. When I queried National for their recommendations, Pete Tremper suggested placing a 5 in. block at the front edge of the rear cowl and use that as the rear broomstick support. This struck me as being very conservative so I decided to dig a little deeper. That meant a visit to Dave Proffitt and the boys at Porsche of the Village.

When I explained my problem to Dave his immediate response was let's get a car and check it out. You see it turns out that the dealers can deploy the roll bars safely with their diagnostic computers. After a suitable car was rounded up and its bars were deployed it was easy to measure how high off the cowl we should locate the rear of the “broomstick”. It turns out that it is almost 8½ in. Based on this information we decided on using an 8 in. block to be on the safe side. When I sat in the car and we positioned the “broomstick” between the windshield frame and the roll bar there was about 3 in. between my head and the “stick” with the seat all the way down and back. A typical helmet would reduce this about 1½ to 2 in. leaving 1 to 1½ in. clearance. Therefore my guess is that someone shorter than 6'1” would not require an aftermarket bar but that a taller person possibly would. When I forwarded this information to Pete Tremper he agreed to revise National's recommendations and use the 8 in. block. He did remind me that you always must run with the top up unless arm restraints are used which has always been our policy.

Drivers of Boxsters and similar cars with fixed roll bars can easily do their own “broomstick” test with a little assistance from a 2nd person holding the broomstick and checking the clearance. An interesting note is that Porsche has raised the height of the bars on the new about 1 in. making it closer to the height provided by the pop-up units

in the cabs. Do any of these systems offer as much protection as a properly installed after market roll bar? I don't think so, but for a DE event we believe they are adequate if the "broomstick" test is met.

Jerry Wolf