

MOTIVATION TO IMPORT A SUBARU FORESTER AWD AUTOMATIC

APPLICANT: Initials & Surname

On 6 September 2001 I sustained a spinal injury between vertebrae numbers T3 and T4. These vertebrae were fused. I have full use of my arms and of my hands. I am paralysed below my arms and shoulders. I am 45 years of age and work as an Orthopaedic Surgeon. I need a car that I can operate on my own. At the same time it must be large enough to be used for family holidays, i.e. to accommodate four people with their baggage, as well as my wheelchair and other equipment. In order to perform my duties as an Orthopaedic Surgeon I sometimes need to travel on gravel roads, and the Subaru all wheel drive will enable me to do so. The car will be converted to enable me to operate the accelerator and brake by hand.

The requirements for the car are as follows:

- 1. Automatic transmission**
The vehicle conversion allows for steering with one's left hand and operating the fuel and brake pedals with the right hand. Therefore one cannot operate a manual gear lever and a clutch pedal at the same time.
- 2. Four wheel drive**
If the vehicle gets stuck when one is alone, it would not be possible to get out and use conventional methods to free the vehicle. All wheel drive will also enable me to travel safely on gravel and off-road conditions in the performance of my duties as well as recreational activities.
- 3. Power steering**
Limited arm strength and paralysis of back and stomach muscles require that the steering wheel must be turned easily.
- 4. Power brakes**
After conversion the brakes will be operated by the right hand and should not require inordinate strength.
- 5. Front seat height**
The height of the front seat must be the same as the height of the wheelchair. This facilitates transferring from the wheelchair to the front seat and back. It is difficult to transfer upwards due to limited arm strength and paralysis of back and stomach muscles. The difficulty is likely to increase as one grows older.
- 6. Adjustable front seat/steering wheel**
The height of the front seat and/or steering wheel must be adjustable to provide for leg room under the steering wheel. One's feet must be kept close to the seat and away from the pedals, with the result that the knees are higher than when one's legs protrude forwards.
- 7. Adjustable position front seat/backrest**
The position of the front seat must be adjustable, as well as the slope of the backrest. It must be possible to create more space temporarily in order to pull one's legs up or swing them out with one's hands and arms.
- 8. Front door width**
The front door must open wide enough to park the wheelchair next to the front seat enabling transfer between the two.

9. **Air conditioning**
This is essential, because a paraplegic's body temperature cannot be regulated in the normal fashion.
10. **Electric windows**
It must be possible to close windows left open by passengers from the driver's seat.
11. **Electric mirror**
An electric mirror on the left side. It would be impossible or very difficult to reach the mirror manually from the driver's seat.
12. **Central locking**
It would be impossible or very difficult to reach all the doors to lock them manually, either from the driver's seat or by means of the wheelchair.
13. **Automatic speed control**
This will reduce fatigue when driving long distances. The accelerator will be hand controlled after conversion.
14. **Boot**
The boot must be large enough to take the paraplegic's wheelchair and medical equipment, as well as luggage for four persons, when driving long distances. The wheelchair cannot be accommodated on the roof when driving long distances at speeds of up to 120km/h.
15. **Boot floor level**
The boot door must open on the boot floor level to enable children and older people to load and unload the wheelchair for the paraplegic. If the vehicle has a boot rim the wheelchair has to be lifted higher, creating problems for such persons.
16. **Safety/Dependability**
The vehicle must be safe and dependable.

The Subaru Forester AWD Automatic meets all these requirements.

The following other vehicles were considered:

- a) Volvo V70 A/T – too low to enable unaided transfer, especially from the seat to the wheelchair. Much more expensive than the chosen vehicle.
- b) Ford Falcon Futura S/W – too low to enable unaided transfer, especially from the seat to the wheelchair.
- c) Opel Astra Caravan 1.8CD – too small and too low to enable unaided transfer, especially from the seat to the wheelchair.
- d) Audi Avant – too small and too low to enable unaided transfer, especially from the seat to the wheelchair.

In general I could not find another vehicle that meets all the requirements and costs less. For further information I can be contacted at * or *

* Contact Details