

# INSURANCE INSTITUTE FOR HIGHWAY SAFETY

## NEWS RELEASE

August 27, 1997

### **SATURN FARES BEST AMONG 9 SMALL 4-DOOR CARS IN LOW-SPEED CRASH TESTS; ONE OF BEST PERFORMERS IN 16 YEARS OF TESTING**

ARLINGTON, VA – August 27 – Saturn's 1997 SL2 performed best among nine small four-door cars, sustaining damage totaling only \$655 in four crash tests at 5 mph conducted by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. In contrast, the 1997 Hyundai Elantra sustained almost five times as much damage in the same four tests – more than \$3,000 in repair costs (see table). The 1997 Kia Sephia and Mitsubishi Mirage also performed poorly.

**Cost to Consumers:** Extensive damage in low-speed impacts "costs consumers in many ways," Institute President Brian O'Neill points out. "It means higher insurance bills, deductibles paid out of consumers' pockets, and, just as important, the major inconvenience of getting around without a car while it's in the shop. It should be unacceptable for damage totaling as much as the Elantra's to occur in crash tests at walking speed."

Consumers cannot discern reasons for the widely varying bumper performances of the nine cars because their bumpers look about the same. It's what's under the bumper covers that counts, and the Saturn has a strong bumper reinforcement bar plus energy-absorbing material to prevent damage to expensive body parts in many low-speed collisions. But the Elantra has no energy-absorbing material under the cover, except a plastic bar, even though there's more than sufficient space for it.

"This isn't like some other poor bumper designs we've seen in the past where the stylist hasn't left enough space for the engineers to design an effective bumper," O'Neill says. "In this case, the engineers just wasted the space."

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The Institute's low-speed crash test series includes front- and rear-into-flat-barrier impacts plus two localized impacts, front-into-angle-barrier and rear-into-pole. All tests are conducted at 5 mph.

The Saturn sustained no damage at all in the rear-into-pole test, which typically produces the most damage. There was only minor damage in the two flat-barrier impacts – so minor that many car owners might not bother to get it fixed. Significant damage occurred to the Saturn only in the angle-barrier test.

The Saturn is among cars with the least amount of damage in the four Institute tests since the 1981 Ford Escort sustained \$0 damage in the same four tests.

**Purpose of the 5 MPH Low-Speed Tests:** The Institute conducts 5 mph crash tests to inform consumers about how well various cars manage the energy of these impacts. "We want consumers to know how the cars perform. We also want to encourage manufacturers to improve the bumpers on their cars," O'Neill explains.

**Video News Release on Wednesday, August 27, 1997:**  
10:00 to 10:30 am EDT; Galaxy C(4)/Transponder 14  
Repeat at 1:00 to 1:30 pm EDT; Galaxy 9/Transponder 1  
Crash test footage & related video; SOTs Brian O'Neill

For related information, visit <http://www.hwysafety.org>.  
1-page attachment (table) follows 2-page press release

**DAMAGE REPAIR COSTS**  
**1997 Small Four-Door Cars in Crash Tests at 5 Miles per Hour**

	Front Into Barrier	Rear Into Barrier	Front Into Angle Barrier	Rear Into Pole	Total Damage	Average Damage per Test
<b>Saturn SL2</b> \$14,910	\$105	\$ 50	\$500	\$ 0	\$ 655	\$164
<b>Volkswagen Jetta GL</b> \$17,465	141	0	713	236	1,090	273
<b>Dodge Neon Highline</b> \$14,080	148	84	347	513	1,092	273
<b>Honda Civic LX</b> \$15,845	55	105	815	469	1,444	361
<b>Ford Escort LX</b> \$14,095	237	148	741	626	1,752	438
<b>Mazda Protege LX</b> \$15,940	599	135	461	700	1,895	474
<b>Mitsubishi Mirage DE</b> \$14,410	562	243	856	972	2,633	658
<b>Kia Sephia LS</b> \$13,385	353	435	727	1,298	2,813	703
<b>Hyundai Elantra</b> \$12,764	228	386	717	1,711	3,042	761

Repair costs reflect July 1997 prices. Car prices are mfg. retail plus options, freight.