

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety computed driver death rates for 141 passenger vehicles, 1991-95 models during the calendar period 1992-96. In addition, the Highway Loss Data Institute compared insurance injury, vehicle damage, and theft claims experience for 236 passenger vehicles, all 1994-96 models. The lists of vehicles in the two reports aren't identical because the studies include different model years during different periods of study. Together, these reports give consumers important new information to use when shopping for cars and other passenger vehicles.

Wide Variation in Results, Even Among Vehicles in Same Style/Size Groups: "An important finding in both reports is the huge variation in the rates of both driver deaths and insurance claims for injuries," O'Neill explains. "The variation doesn't apply just to the best and worst vehicles overall. Even when you look at vehicles grouped by body style and size, there still are very large differences between the ones with the lowest and highest rates."

Among midsize four-door cars, for example, the Lexus ES 300 and Volvo 850 have relative overall driver death rates of about 30, which is much lower than the average for all passenger vehicles included in the Institute's study (100 represents the average, so a result of 30 is 70 percent better than average). But the Dodge Neon's relative rate of 187 is more than six times as high – and nearly twice as high as the all-vehicle average. The Neon also has poor injury claims experience. It should be noted, however, that the Neon is one of the smaller cars classified as midsize.

The vehicles with the lowest death rates tend to be passenger vans and station wagons, large four-door cars, and large utility vehicles.

2 attachments (consumer brochures) follow release
Related information is available at these websites:
(1) www.carsafety.org (2) www.hwysafety.org