

# INSURANCE INSTITUTE FOR HIGHWAY SAFETY

## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Thursday, May 8, 1997

### Lexus and Mercedes Rate Worst Among Luxury Cars in Low-Speed Bumper Tests While Domestic Lincoln and Cadillac Perform Best

ARLINGTON, VA – Four of the six 1997 model luxury cars the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety tested at 5 mph have poor bumpers. All four are imports, and all cost big bucks to repair after walking-speed impacts.

The Lexus LS 400 was the worst performer in the group, racking up \$6,195 in total repair costs. The Mercedes E420 was nearly as bad. It sustained \$6,042 total damage in the four bumper tests. Two other cars had more than \$3,500 damage – the Infiniti Q45 and the BMW 540i.

Two domestic cars were the best performers. The Lincoln Continental had \$1,090 total damage in the four tests. The Cadillac Seville was next best with \$1,747 total damage.

“Costs to repair the imported luxury cars are high not only because of parts prices but because the bumpers are poor designs,” says Institute President Brian O’Neill. “Our test results illustrate what can happen when styling becomes more important than function. Automakers can make bumpers that are effective and stylish. It’s not too much to expect good bumpers, no matter what a car costs. But it’s particularly sad when a consumer pays a lot of money for a luxury car and gets lousy bumpers.”

O’Neill notes that Toyota put effective bumpers on its 1997 Camry but failed to do the same on its luxury model Lexus. This car did poorly in three of the four tests, especially in the rear-into-pole test where it sustained \$3,293 damage. In comparison, the Camry’s rear bumper held up well in this test, resulting in

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only \$590 damage. Total damage for the 1997 Camry in all tests was \$1,370 – the Lexus sustained more than four times that much damage.

The Institute has been evaluating bumpers on passenger cars for more than 25 years, but this is the first time luxury sedans have been subjected to the low-speed tests. The Institute conducts the bumper tests to provide consumers with information on the comparative bumper performance of groups of new cars and to encourage automakers with poor bumpers to improve them. These 5 mph tests include front- and rear-into-flat barrier, front-into-angle-barrier, and rear-into-pole.

**Video News Release: Thursday, May 8, 1997, 2-2:30 p.m. EDT**  
**Galaxy 9/Transponder 2/Audio 6.2 & 6.8. Crash test footage**  
**& related video sound bites Brian O’Neill, Institute President**

<b>DAMAGE REPAIR COSTS</b>						
<b>Luxury Car Performance in Crash Tests at 5 Miles per Hour</b>						
	<b>Front Into Barrier</b>	<b>Rear Into Barrier</b>	<b>Front Into Angle Barrier</b>	<b>Rear Into Pole</b>	<b>Total Damage</b>	<b>Average Damage per Test</b>
<b>Lincoln Continental</b> \$41,710	\$ 0	\$ 16	\$ 768	\$ 306	\$ 1,090	\$ 272
<b>Cadillac Seville SLS</b> \$42,320	292	160	536	759	1,747	437
<b>BMW 540i</b> \$51,120	454	351	1,672	1,119	3,596	899
<b>Infiniti Q45</b> \$48,395	386	563	1,567	1,246	3,762	940
<b>Mercedes E420</b> \$51,585	372	1,066	2,106	2,498	6,042	1,510
<b>Lexus LS 400</b> \$58,587	748	0	2,154	3,293	6,195	1,549
<b>* Camry LE (comparison)</b> \$18,715	143	93	544	590	1,370	342

Note: Cars tested are 1997 models. Repair costs reflect April 1997 prices. Car prices are manufacturers' suggested retail including options and freight.