

INSURANCE INSTITUTE FOR HIGHWAY SAFETY

NEWS RELEASE

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CONSUMERS GET HELP IN SHOPPING FOR A SAFER CAR: FEATURES TO LOOK FOR, OTHER SAFETY INFORMATION

ARLINGTON, VA – Safety ranks near the top of new car buyers' purchase considerations, and a new Insurance Institute for Highway Safety publication helps consumers shop with safety in mind. There's a description of the priorities involved in shopping for a safer car. The publication also summarizes the design characteristics – structural design, restraint systems – that make some cars safer than others.

"The purpose is to help consumers decide which features are most important and which don't matter as much," Institute President Brian O'Neill explains. "Plus we summarize Institute crash test results and supply other information to give consumers a head start toward choosing a safer vehicle."

First Priority: Shop for Features that Protect You in a Crash

The most important safety features reduce the risk of death or serious injury when a crash occurs. "Shopping for a Safer Car" gives these tips and more:

- ⇒ All else being equal, you're safer in a larger, heavier vehicle.
- ⇒ Choose a vehicle with comfortable lap/shoulder belts so they'll be used.
- ⇒ Side airbags, a safety plus, are in more and more new models.
- ⇒ Choose head restraints positioned high and close to the back of your head.
- ⇒ If you often transport kids, consider a vehicle with built-in child restraints.

Crash Test Performance

The new brochure summarizes the performance of dozens of popular cars in frontal offset crash tests. "It's important to remember to compare test results only for vehicles in the same weight class. Comparisons across classes aren't valid,"

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O'Neill explains. The Institute's brochure lists "best pick" models in three weight classes:

- ⇒ Midsize 4-dr. cars – Ford Taurus, Chevrolet Lumina, Toyota Camry, Volvo 850/S70
- ⇒ Large luxury cars – BMW 5 series, Lexus LS 400
- ⇒ Passenger vans – Ford Windstar

Many Advanced Crash Avoidance Features Don't Live Up to Safety Billing

Basic crash avoidance features like brakes, lights, and turn signals are essential, but few of the more advanced safety features promoted for crash avoidance have demonstrated they reduce crashes. "Take traction control and four wheel drive," O'Neill says. "They're touted to help avoid crashes, but they're more about enhanced performance, faster starts, and cornering. Antilock brakes might be worthwhile for motorists who drive a lot on slick roads, but their test track performance hasn't translated into fewer crashes. They won't let you stop sooner in all circumstances."

Consumers may obtain a copy of the brochure by sending a self-addressed, stamped envelope to P.O. Box 1420, Arlington, VA 22210.

Available on the Internet: www.highwaysafety.org.