

INSURANCE INSTITUTE FOR HIGHWAY SAFETY

NEWS RELEASE

April 28, 1998

EXCELLENT BUMPERS ON VOLKSWAGEN'S NEW BEETLE; MINIMAL DAMAGE IS SUSTAINED IN 5 MPH CRASH TESTS

ARLINGTON, VA – The New Beetles now arriving at dealer showrooms are equipped with excellent bumpers. Both front and rear bumpers will prevent much of the damage that can occur in low-speed collisions – the kind of crash that frequently happens in congested urban traffic. This is the finding of a series of four Insurance Institute for Highway Safety crash tests conducted at 5 mph to assess bumper performance. Next week, the Institute will release results of the Beetle's high-speed crash test performance.

In all four low-speed tests, damage to the Beetle totaled only \$134. "This is way below what we typically see," Institute President Brian O'Neill says. "There was much less damage than to any other 1997 or '98 small car we tested. In fact, the Beetle is the only car the Institute has tested that begins to compare with the 1981 Ford Escort, which sustained no damage in any of the four tests at 5 mph."

In comparison, the second best performer among 1997-98 small cars was the Saturn SL, which sustained more than \$600 damage in the same four tests (see attached table). All other small cars except the Toyota Corolla sustained more than \$1,000 damage. The worst performer, the Hyundai Elantra, sustained more than \$3,000 damage.

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

In the most demanding of the four tests, rear-into-pole, the Beetle sustained no damage at all. Only the Saturn matched this performance. In contrast, the Elantra sustained more than \$1,700 damage in the same test.

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DAMAGE REPAIR COSTS
1997-98 Small Cars in Crash Tests at 5 Miles per Hour

	Front Into <u>Barrier</u>	Rear Into <u>Barrier</u>	Front Into Angle <u>Barrier</u>	Rear Into <u>Pole</u>	Total <u>Damage</u>	Average Damage per Test
Volkswagen New Beetle	\$16	\$0	\$118	\$0	\$ 134	\$34
Saturn SL2	\$105	\$50	\$501	\$0	\$ 656	\$164
Toyota Corolla LE	\$0	\$316	\$283	\$250	\$849	\$212
Nissan Sentra GXE	\$368	\$0	\$624	\$37	\$1,029	\$257
Dodge Neon Highline	\$132	\$81	\$331	\$494	\$1,038	\$260
Volkswagen Jetta GL	\$141	\$0	\$718	\$236	\$1,095	\$274
Honda Civic LX	\$55	\$80	\$797	\$460	\$1,392	\$348
Ford Escort LX	\$237	\$148	\$757	\$642	\$1,784	\$446
Mazda Protege LX	\$599	\$135	\$461	\$700	\$1,895	\$474
Mitsubishi Mirage DE	\$562	\$243	\$856	\$972	\$2,633	\$658
Kia Sephia LS	\$353	\$438	\$727	\$1,298	\$2,816	\$704
Hyundai Elantra	\$228	\$386	\$717	\$1,711	\$3,042	\$761

Repair costs reflect March 1998 prices

The Beetle's superior bumpers "show what can be accomplished when a manufacturer decides to make damage resistance a priority," O'Neill points out. He adds that the flimsier bumpers on competing models "mean lots of unnecessary damage in minor impacts, higher insurance bills, deductibles paid out of consumers' pockets, and the major inconvenience of doing without a car while it's in the shop to repair damage that likely wouldn't have occurred to the Beetle in the same low-speed collision."

Coming May 4: New Beetle's high-speed crash test results

End of two-page release on Volkswagen Beetle's bumpers.
 Video news release Tuesday, April 28 at 1:00-1:30 p.m. EDT
 Galaxy 9/Transponder 1; crash test footage & related video

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