

INSURANCE INSTITUTE FOR HIGHWAY SAFETY

NEWS RELEASE

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CRASH TEST RESULTS: NEW CAR DESIGNS YIELD SOME CRASHWORTHINESS IMPROVEMENTS, BUT NOT ALL CARS ARE IMPROVED SINCE PREVIOUS TESTING

ARLINGTON, VA – Seven new vehicles representing six updated designs plus one brand new model have been tested in frontal offset crashes at 40 mph. Two of the six cars with updated designs show improvements since the last time they were tested by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, and the other four models retain their previous crashworthiness ratings (see attached summary of ratings).

The Institute's crashworthiness ratings of good, acceptable, marginal, or poor are based primarily on vehicle performance in the offset test. The top-rated cars are designated "best picks."

The one new model the Institute tested this time around, Lincoln's 2000 LS, earns a good overall rating and a "best pick" designation. One of the four redesigned models that retains its earlier rating, the 2000 Ford Taurus, already had earned the highest overall evaluation based on its performance in the offset test, so it couldn't improve any more. The 1992-95 and 1996-99 models of this car, like the 2000, earned good overall evaluations and "best pick" designations.

Crashworthiness improvements: The two improved models recently tested by the Institute are the 2000 Toyota Avalon, a moderately priced midsize car, and the 2000 Mazda MPV, a passenger van. The Avalon improves to a good overall rating from marginal when the Institute originally tested the 1996 model. The MPV improves from marginal (1996 model) to acceptable. Nissan's redesigned Sentra (small car) and Maxima (moderately priced midsize car) retain their acceptable ratings from earlier tests. The 2000 Isuzu Rodeo still is rated poor, the same rating earned by the 1996 version of this midsize utility vehicle.

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"We started evaluating car crashworthiness in 40 mph frontal offset tests in 1995," Institute president Brian O'Neill says, "and since then we've tried to test new vehicle designs as quickly as they become available in showrooms. We know the manufacturers are paying attention to these crash test results, and what we're seeing in general are crashworthiness improvements when automakers redesign their vehicles. Still, there's plenty of room for more improvement. Too many new and redesigned vehicles still aren't good performers."

Presenting the updated test results for seven passenger vehicles, O'Neill cautions against comparing the results across vehicle type and size groups. "It would be tempting to conclude that a small vehicle with a top rating is more crashworthy than a larger car or van with a somewhat lower rating. But crash test results shouldn't be compared among vehicles with large weight differences. This is because barrier tests, including our 40 mph frontal offset impact into a deformable barrier, are more demanding of heavier vehicles than lighter ones. The most meaningful comparisons are among vehicles in the same type/size group. For example, compare small cars with other small cars, midsize utility vehicles with other midsize utility vehicles."

New results of 40 mph frontal offset crash tests are summarized below.

Large family cars: The Institute tested a 2000 Ford Taurus. This redesigned model earns a good rating for structural performance in the offset test, and dummy injury measures were low. Restraints/dummy kinematics are rated acceptable. This model, like two earlier Taurus designs, earns a good overall evaluation and a "best pick" designation.

Moderately priced midsize cars: The Institute tested a 2000 Toyota Avalon and 2000 Nissan Maxima, both redesigned versions of earlier models. The new Avalon gets good ratings across the board for structural performance, dummy injury measures, and restraints/dummy kinematics. This model earns a good overall evaluation and "best pick" designation. "We've tested the Avalon three times. The 1995-97 models were rated marginal,

and the 1998-99 models improved to acceptable," O'Neill points out. "The 2000 model represents a big success story because of the substantial improvements compared with the first time we tested an Avalon."

The 2000 Maxima earns an acceptable overall evaluation, the same as 1997-99 models. A 1995 Maxima design was rated poor overall, so there has been improvement since the Institute began conducting offset tests to evaluate car crashworthiness.

Small cars: The Institute tested a 2000 Nissan Sentra, which retains the same overall evaluation of acceptable as the 1998 design.

Passenger vans: The Institute tested a 2000 Mazda MPV, which earns an acceptable overall rating. The rating for structural performance improves from marginal to acceptable, compared with the last time this model was tested (1996 design). Restraints/dummy kinematics improve from marginal to good. However, an injury measure recorded on the dummy's right leg/foot changes from acceptable to poor, indicating the likelihood of injury.

Midsized utility vehicles: The Institute tested a 2000 Isuzu Rodeo, which fails to improve from its overall rating of poor the last time this model was tested (1996 design). The structure has been improved, but high crash forces recorded on the dummy's head indicate the likelihood of injury.

Large luxury cars: The Institute tested a 2000 Lincoln LS, a brand new model that earns good ratings for structure, dummy injury measures, and restraints/kinematics. The overall evaluation is good, and this car is a "best pick."

End 3-page release on vehicle crashworthiness
1-page attachment: crashworthiness ratings
Video news release Wed., 6/21, 1-1:30 pm EDT
(C) Telstar 6/Trans. 8; crash test footage & more

Internet: www.highwaysafety.org

Crashworthiness Evaluations

OVERALL EVALUATION	Frontal Offset Crash Test Performance						Other Evaluations					
	Structure/ Safety Cage	Injury Measures				Restraints/ Dummy Kinematics	Head Restraint Design	Bumper Performance				
		Head/ Neck	Chest	Leg/Foot Left, Right								
LARGE FAMILY CARS												
a best pick	FORD TAURUS/MERCURY SABLE 2000 models test vehicle = 3,333 lbs.	G	G	G	G	G	G	A	A	M	A	depends on seat
	1996-99 models test vehicle = 3,331 lbs.	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	P	G		
	1992-95 models test vehicle = 3,159 lbs.	G	G	A	G	G	G	G	P	M		
MODERATELY PRICED MIDSIZE CARS												
a best pick	TOYOTA AVALON 2000 models test vehicle = 3,468 lbs.	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	A	A		
	1998-99 models; test vehicle = 3,404 lbs.	A	A	G	G	P	G	A	A	P	A	depends on seat
	1995-97 models; test vehicle = 3,225 lbs.	M	M	G	G	P	A	G	P	P		
	NISSAN MAXIMA/INFINITI I30 2000 models; test vehicle = 3,220 lbs.	A	A	G	G	P	P	G	G	A	M	depends on seat
	1997-99 models; test vehicle = 3,104 lbs.	A	A	G	G	M	A	A	A	M	G	depends on seat
	Maxima (1995-96s)/Infiniti (1996s) test vehicle = 3,012 lbs.	P	A	M	G	P	P	P	M	P		
SMALL CARS												
	NISSAN SENTRA 2000 models; test vehicle = 2,650 lbs.	A	A	A	G	G	A	G	M	A		
	1998-1999 models; test vehicle = 2,500 lbs.	A	M	A	G	M	G	A	M	G		
PASSENGER VANS												
	MAZDA MPV 2000 models; test vehicle = 3,657 lbs.	A	A	A	G	G	P	G	A	P		
	1996-98 models; test vehicle = 3,799 lbs.	M	M	G	G	M	A	M	M	P		
MIDSIZE UTILITY VEHICLES												
	ISUZU RODEO/HONDA PASSPORT 2000 models; test vehicle = 4,010 lbs.	P	G	P	G	P	A	M	A	P		
	1996-97 models; test vehicle = 4,158 lbs.	P	P	G	G	P	P	M	P	P		
LARGE LUXURY CARS												
a best pick	LINCOLN LS 2000 models; test vehicle = 3,818 lbs. (new model; no previous designs for comparison)	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	P	M		

LEGEND: **G** GOOD **A** ACCEPTABLE **M** MARGINAL **P** POOR

NOTE: COMPARISONS ACROSS VEHICLE GROUPS AREN'T VALID.