

INSURANCE INSTITUTE FOR HIGHWAY SAFETY

NEWS RELEASE

September 13, 2000

FLIMSY BUMPERS ON SUVs FAIL TO RESIST DAMAGE; FOUR OF FIVE TESTED EARN LOWEST POSSIBLE RATING

ARLINGTON, VA – Some manufacturers are improving the bumpers on automobiles so consumers are less likely to face expensive repairs from low-speed collisions, but these improvements aren't carrying over to sport utility vehicles. Four of the five midsize SUVs recently tested by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety allowed excessive damage (see table, p.2) in a series of 5 mph crash tests.

Best and worst performers: The 2001 BMW X5 "is the only SUV in this group with halfway decent bumpers," says Institute president Brian O'Neill. "The rear bumper is good. It allowed only about \$200 damage in the pole impact, which usually is the toughest of our four bumper tests. The X5 also performed well in the rear-into-flat-barrier test, but there was too much damage in the front-flat and front-angle barrier tests."

The worst performer is the 2000 model Isuzu Trooper. It sustained more than \$11,000 damage in the four crash tests, including more than \$3,000 damage in the 5 mph rear-into-pole impact. Intrusion of the spare tire mounted on the back of this SUV crushed both of the rear tailgates and shattered the glass. "This is a very poor performer. The Trooper is the worst midsize SUV we've ever tested," O'Neill notes.

Sales brochures for the Trooper point to its "endurance" and claim it's "tough enough to haul a 5,000 pound trailer." O'Neill counters that the Trooper "isn't tough enough to withstand a simple impact at little more than walking speed without thousands of dollars worth of damage. It's tough enough to tow a heavy trailer, but don't bump this vehicle into anything in reverse because it's so fragile."

Another poor performer is the 2001 Mitsubishi Montero with about \$9,000 damage in the Institute's 5 mph bumper tests. Once again, the rear tailgate and glass were crushed

— MORE —

**DAMAGE REPAIR COSTS,
 5 MPH CRASH TEST RESULTS, MIDSIZE SPORT UTILITY VEHICLES**

	Front Into Flat <u>Barrier</u>	Rear Into Flat <u>Barrier</u>	Front Into Angle <u>Barrier</u>	Rear Into <u>Pole</u>	Total Damage <u>4 Tests</u>	Average Damage <u>Each Test</u>
2001 BMW X5	\$794	\$254	\$949	\$190	\$2,187	\$547
2000 Nissan Xterra	\$577	\$884	\$1,994	\$991	\$4,446	\$1,112
Isuzu Rodeo						
2000 model	\$1,769	\$924	\$1,932	\$552	\$5,177	\$1,294
1996 model	\$1,207	\$2,433	\$2,101	\$2,375	\$8,116	\$2,029
Mitsubishi Montero						
2001 model	\$1,210	\$2,495	\$2,525	\$2,831	\$9,061	\$2,265
1996 model	\$539	\$2,656	\$1,915	\$1,259	\$6,369	\$1,592
2000 Isuzu Trooper	\$2,890	\$2,618	\$2,333	\$3,317	\$11,158	\$2,790

Note: Repair costs reflect August 2000 prices.

in the rear-into-pole impact by the spare tire mounted on the back. Cost of damage after this test: about \$2,800. Total damage to the Montero in all four impacts increased since the last time the Institute tested this SUV, largely because of the increased damage sustained in the pole test.

Some improvement in Rodeo's performance, but it's still poor: The Isuzu Rodeo also was previously tested. The 1996 model was designed with the same tailgate-mounted spare tire as the new Trooper and redesigned Mitsubishi Montero. But the 2000 model Rodeo comes with the spare tire located underneath the vehicle (tailgate-mount optional) and damage was re-

duced from more than \$2,000 in each rear crash test (1996 model) to less than \$1,000 (2000 model).

No damage-resistance requirements: One reason SUVs perform so poorly in the Institute's bumper tests is that they aren't subject to any requirements to prevent damage in low-speed impacts. Automobile bumpers have to meet federal standards in 2.5 mph impacts, and most of the bumper systems on cars include foam or other material to absorb crash energy. "But the bumpers on most SUVs — including both Isuzu models, the Montero, and the Xterra — don't have anything effective to absorb energy," O'Neill says. He adds that "the BMW X5 does. It has energy absorbers on the back, which is one reason it performed so well in the rear impacts" (rear-into-flat-barrier and rear-into-pole).

"SUVs may be advertised as rugged. Manufacturers tell potential buyers they can drive these vehicles anywhere adventure leads them. But consumers can expect big repair bills if they're unlucky enough to bump these so-called rugged vehicles into something at slow speeds," O'Neill concludes.

End 3-page release on damage repair costs after low-speed tests.
Video news release on Wed., Sept. 13, 2000, 1:00-1:30 pm EDT
(C) Telstar 6/Trans. 8; includes crash test footage, related video

Internet: www.highwaysafety.org