
INSURANCE INSTITUTE FOR HIGHWAY SAFETY

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CRASH TEST RESULTS: PERFORMANCES OF THREE SMALL SUVs VARY; NEW HYUNDAI SANTA FE IS TOPS, BUT NEW FORD ESCAPE DISAPPOINTS

ARLINGTON, VA — One of three small sport utility vehicle designs, new for 2001, earns a good overall rating based on performance in a 40 mph frontal offset crash test conducted by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. The Hyundai Santa Fe earns this distinction, going to the top of the list of 10 current small SUV designs the Institute has evaluated (see attached ratings). The other two new small SUVs earn lower ratings — the Toyota RAV4 (redesigned for 2001) is acceptable, and the Ford Escape (a new model for 2001) is marginal.

Best performer: The 2001 Hyundai Santa Fe held up very well in the Institute's 40 mph crash test. There wasn't much intrusion into the occupant compartment, so the space around the driver dummy was maintained well. "The only problem was that the dummy's head hit the B-pillar hard during rebound from the airbag," Institute president Brian O'Neill points out. "This wasn't indicative of a serious head injury, but it did prevent the Santa Fe from earning a 'best pick' designation. As it is, the crashworthiness of the Santa Fe is good."

New RAV4 design is an improvement: This is the second time the Institute has tested a RAV4 in the 40 mph frontal offset impact. An earlier design (1998 model) was rated marginal. The new 2001 model tested better. "In particular, the structural performance improved. But there still is room for improvement. The dummy's head hit the steering wheel through the airbag, and there was a possibility of injury to both lower legs," O'Neill says.

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'Disappointing' debut of Ford Escape: There was moderate to major intrusion into the driver footwell area of the 2001 Ford Escape during the Institute's 40 mph crash test. Because of this, there was a high likelihood of right leg injury. The dummy's head struck the steering wheel through the airbag, and then during rebound its head struck the B-pillar. Both head impacts were hard. "Overall this is a disappointing showing," O'Neill says. "The Escape was Ford's joint program with Mazda, and clearly this cooperative effort didn't produce a particularly crashworthy design."

Comparison with passenger cars: Small SUVs weigh about the same as midsize cars. This means their crash test results can be compared directly (results shouldn't be compared among vehicles with large weight differences). "These comparisons aren't favorable to the group of small SUVs, which only includes two good performers," O'Neill also says.

The Institute's crashworthiness evaluations are based primarily on results of the frontal offset crash test. Each vehicle's overall evaluation (see attached ratings) is based on three aspects of performance: measurements of occupant compartment intrusion, injury risk measures from a Hybrid III dummy positioned in the driver seat, and analysis of slow-motion film to assess how well the restraint system controlled dummy movement during the test.

**End 2-page release on small SUV crashworthiness
Attachment (1-page): SUV crashworthiness ratings
Video news release Mon., April 23, 1:00-1:30 pm EDT
(C) Telstar 6/Trans. 8; crash test footage, related video**

Internet: www.highwaysafety.org

Evaluations

Frontal Offset Crash Test Performance

Other Evaluations

NEWLY TESTED	Small utility vehicles	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				
NEWLY TESTED	HYUNDAI SANTA FE 2001 models test vehicle wt. = 3,836 lbs.	G	G	A	G	G	A	G	P	
	SUBARU FORESTER 1999-2001 models test vehicle wt. = 3,168 lbs.	G	A	G	G	G	A	G	M	
	JEEP WRANGLER 1997-2001 models test vehicle wt. = 3,247 lbs.	A	A	G	G	A	G	A	M	
NEWLY TESTED	TOYOTA RAV4 2001 models test vehicle wt. = 3,104 lbs.	A	G	A	G	A	A	A	G	P
	SUZUKI GRAND VITARA SUZUKI VITARA CHEVROLET TRACKER 1999-2001 models test vehicle wt. = 3,223 lbs.	A	A	A	G	G	G	A	G	A
	KIA SPORTAGE 1998-2001 models test vehicle wt. = 3,338 lbs.	M	M	G	G	M	G	P	M	P
	HONDA CR-V 1997-2001 models test vehicle wt. = 3,214 lbs.	M	A	M	G	P	G	A	A	P
	JEEP CHEROKEE 1997-2001 models test vehicle wt. = 3,479 lbs.	M	M	G	G	P	A	M	P	P
NEWLY TESTED	FORD ESCAPE MAZDA TRIBUTE 2001 models test vehicle wt. = 3,408 lbs.	M	M	A	G	G	P	A	P	A
	ISUZU AMIGO ISUZU RODEO SPORT 1998-2001 models test vehicle wt. = 3,598 lbs.	P	P	G	G	M	G	P	A	P
	Crashworthiness evaluation of earlier design:									
	TOYOTA RAV4 1996-2000 models test vehicle wt. = 3,007 lbs.	M	A	A	A	P	G	M	A	P

G GOOD A ACCEPTABLE M MARGINAL P POOR