

INSURANCE INSTITUTE FOR HIGHWAY SAFETY

NEWS RELEASE

November 2, 2005

AUDI, FORD, SUBARU, AND VW CARS EARN GOOD RATINGS IN BOTH FRONT AND SIDE CRASH TESTS

ARLINGTON, VA — Three new or redesigned midsize cars earned “double best pick” designations for very good overall performance in both front and side tests conducted by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. These top performers are the 2006 Audi A3, 2006 Volkswagen Passat, and 2006 Subaru Legacy (see attached ratings). The 2005-06 Ford Five Hundred/Mercury Montego, a large car, earned good overall ratings in both tests but didn’t earn the “best pick” designation in the side impact. The A3 is the third Audi to earn “double best pick.”

“The structural performances of the A3 and Passat in the side impact were good — impressive because most vehicles we’ve tested so far have allowed way too much intrusion. The structures of the VW Jetta and Audi A6 also are good, which indicates that this automaker has made the effort to design strong side structures that help protect people in crashes, even serious side impacts,” says Institute chief operating officer Adrian Lund. The Legacy also earned a good structural rating in the side impact test. Only two other vehicles the Institute has previously tested, the Mitsubishi Galant and Jeep Wrangler, have matched this structural performance.

The automakers requested the side tests of the four cars in this round “earlier than our normal test schedule. Volkswagen and Audi also asked for the frontal tests. We encourage this when manufacturers have new designs they expect will perform well,” Lund says. “This way the test results will be released earlier, as consumers are beginning to shop for new models. When we do conduct tests early, the automakers provide reimbursement for the cost of the vehicles.”

Summary of results: The A3, Passat, and Legacy (all 2006 models) earned good ratings and “best pick” in both front and side tests — they’re “double best picks” (frontal offset results for the Legacy were released earlier this year). The Legacy was redesigned for the 2005 model year, and this model was rated marginal for side impact protection.

— MORE —

Beginning with 2006 models, Subaru changed the Legacy's side structure, front seats, and front seat-mounted torso airbags to improve occupant protection in side crashes.

The Five Hundred/Montego earned a good rating and "best pick" in the frontal offset test (results released earlier this year). Now this design has earned a good rating for side impact protection, though the rating applies only to Five Hundreds and twin Mercury Montegos equipped with optional side airbags with head protection. The Five Hundred without the side airbags will be tested next year when the Institute assesses the side impact crashworthiness of other large family cars. The performance of this car without the airbags almost certainly will be worse.

"Manufacturers are paying attention to our tests, and the result is that consumers have a wider choice of vehicles that do a good job of protecting them in the two most common kinds of serious crashes, front and side," Lund says.

How vehicles are evaluated: The Institute's frontal crashworthiness evaluations are based on results of frontal offset crash tests at 40 mph. Each vehicle's overall evaluation is based on measurements of intrusion into the occupant compartment, injury measures from a Hybrid III dummy in the driver seat, and analysis of slow-motion film to assess how well the restraint system controlled dummy movement during the test.

Each vehicle's overall side evaluation is based on injury measures recorded on two instrumented SID-IIIs dummies, assessment of head protection countermeasures, and the vehicle's structural performance during the impact. Injury measures obtained from the two dummies, one in the driver seat and the other in the rear seat behind the driver, are used to determine the likelihood that a driver and/or passenger in a real-world crash would have sustained serious injury to various body regions. The movements and contacts of the dummies' heads during the crash also are evaluated. This assessment is more important for seating positions without head-protecting airbags which, assuming they perform as intended, should prevent injurious head contacts. Structural performance is based on measurements indicating the amount of B-pillar intrusion into the occupant compartment. Some intrusion into the compartment is inevitable in serious side impacts, but any intrusion that does occur should be uniform both horizontally and vertically and shouldn't seriously compromise the driver or passenger space.

End 2-page news release on front & side crash tests; 1-page attachment

ATTACHMENT: NEWLY TESTED VEHICLES, P.1 OF 1



AUDI A3

Midsize moderately priced car

FRONTAL OFFSET TEST

2006 models; test vehicle = 3,241 lbs.

OVERALL FRONTAL RATING

G



STRUCTURE/ SAFETY CAGE

G

INJURY MEASURES

Head/neck	Chest	Leg/foot (right/left)	
G	G	G	A

OVERALL SIDE RATING

G



HEAD PROTECTION

Driver	G
Rear passenger	G

INJURY MEASURES

Head/neck	Torso	Pelvis/leg
G	G	G
G	G	G

STRUCTURE/ SAFETY CAGE

G

SIDE IMPACT TEST CONDUCTED WITH STANDARD FRONT & REAR HEAD CURTAIN AIRBAGS AND STANDARD FRONT SEAT-MOUNTED TORSO AIRBAGS
2006 models; test vehicle = 3,280 lbs.



VOLKSWAGEN PASSAT

Midsize moderately priced car

FRONTAL OFFSET TEST

2006 models; test vehicle = 3,435 lbs.

OVERALL FRONTAL RATING

G



STRUCTURE/ SAFETY CAGE

G

INJURY MEASURES

Head/neck	Chest	Leg/foot (right/left)	
G	G	G	G

OVERALL SIDE RATING

G



HEAD PROTECTION

Driver	G
Rear passenger	G

INJURY MEASURES

Head/neck	Torso	Pelvis/leg
G	G	G
G	G	G

STRUCTURE/ SAFETY CAGE

G

SIDE IMPACT TEST CONDUCTED WITH STANDARD FRONT & REAR HEAD CURTAIN AIRBAGS AND STANDARD FRONT SEAT-MOUNTED TORSO AIRBAGS
2006 models; test vehicle = 3,417 lbs.



SUBARU LEGACY

Midsize moderately priced car

SIDE IMPACT TEST CONDUCTED WITH STANDARD FRONT & REAR HEAD CURTAIN AIRBAGS AND STANDARD FRONT SEAT-MOUNTED TORSO AIRBAGS
2006 models; test vehicle = 3,320 lbs.

OVERALL SIDE RATING

G



HEAD PROTECTION

Driver	G
Rear passenger	G

INJURY MEASURES

Head/neck	Torso	Pelvis/leg
G	A	G
G	G	G

STRUCTURE/ SAFETY CAGE

G

**FORD FIVE HUNDRED
MERCURY MONTEGO**

Large family cars

SIDE IMPACT TEST CONDUCTED WITH OPTIONAL FRONT & REAR HEAD CURTAIN AIRBAGS AND OPTIONAL FRONT SEAT-MOUNTED TORSO AIRBAGS
2005-06 models; test vehicle = 3,717 lbs.

OVERALL SIDE RATING

G

HEAD PROTECTION

Driver	G
Rear passenger	G

INJURY MEASURES

Head/neck	Torso	Pelvis/leg
G	A	A
G	G	G

STRUCTURE/ SAFETY CAGE

A

GOOD G M MARGINAL
ACCEPTABLE A P POOR

Note: Side impact crash test ratings can be compared across vehicle type and weight categories. However, **frontal crash test ratings cannot be compared across vehicle categories** because the kinetic energy involved in the frontal test depends on the speed and weight of the test vehicle, and the impact is more severe for heavier vehicles.