

SUVs and pickups provide inadequate protection

The majority of sports utility vehicles and pickup trucks do not provide adequate protection for passengers in the instance of rear-end collisions, according to a crash test conducted by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.

The new crash test results, which put seats and head restraints in SUV and pickup truck models through a simulated rear-end crash at 20m/h, reveal that four out of every five new sport utility vehicles and pickup trucks do not protect against whiplash in rear-end collisions. The head restraints tested are in almost all SUVs and pickup trucks that are currently in production in the U.S.

Russ Rader, a spokesperson from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, recently told a CTV Canada AM audience that "overall, four out of five models of SUVs and pickups have inadequate head restraints and seats."

The tests concerning SUVs indicated that: the Ford Freestyle, Honda Pilot, Jeep Grand Cherokee, Land Rover LR3, Subaru Forester and the Volvo XC90 received a top score; the Ford Escape, Mazda Tribute and Mercury Mariner all scored the second-highest rating of acceptable; the marginal rating (second-to-worst ranking) was given to Buick Rendezvous; Chevrolet Equinox; Infiniti FX; Mercedes M Class; Mitsubishi Outlander; Nissan Pathfinder; Pontiac Torrent; Saturn Vue; and certain models of the Toyota Highlander; and, Poorly rated SUVs from the 2006 model year were the Acura MDX; BMW X3 and X5; Buick Rainier; Chevrolet TrailBlazer; GMC Envoy; Isuzu Ascender; Chrysler Pacifica; Ford Explorer; Mercury Mountaineer; Honda CR-V; Honda Element; Hyundai Santa Fe; Hyundai Tucson; Jeep Liberty; Kia Sorento; Kia Sportage; Lexus GX 470; Lexus RX 330; Nissan Xterra; Cadillac SRX; Jeep Wrangler; Mitsubishi Endeavor; Mitsubishi Montero; Suzuki Grand Vitara XL-7; Toyota 4Runner; and certain models of the Toyota Highlander.

The studies results on pickup trucks show that: the Ranger earned a good rating for 2005 models but its redesign for 2006, which made the head restraint shorter by nearly three inches, was criticized; Nissan Titan and versions of the Dodge Dakota and Toyota Tundra were deemed acceptable; the Chevrolet Colorado; GMC Canyon; Isuzu i280 and i350; Toyota Tacoma; and certain versions of the Toyota Tundra and Ford F-150 were all deemed marginal; and, the Chevrolet Silverado 1500, GMC Sierra 1500, Dodge Ram 1500, Ford Ranger, Mazda B Series, Nissan Frontier and versions of the Ford F-150 and Dodge Dakota were all given poor ratings.

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety is calling on automakers to pay attention to the study, which received consumer public media attention when Radar released the study's results on air.

"Here in North America, the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety and the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia are rating seats in our markets and we hope that this pushes the automakers to make changes and make improvements."

The insurance institute conducted a similar study of cars in late 2004 and concluded that three-fourths of the restraints provided either poor or marginal protection against whiplash.

An article from the Canadian Underwriter.ca