

INSURANCE INSTITUTE FOR HIGHWAY SAFETY

NEWS RELEASE

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FIRST TIME INSTITUTE SIDE TESTS SMALL PICKUPS: TOYOTA RATES GOOD, BUT RESULTS FOR OTHERS ARE 'DISMAL' AND KEY SAFETY FEATURE ISN'T STANDARD ON MOST MODELS

ARLINGTON, VA — Small pickups aren't providing as much protection in side crashes as many new cars and SUVs. The Toyota Tacoma was the only one of five small pickup trucks, all 2008 models, to earn the highest rating of good for occupant protection in recent side crash tests conducted by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. The Dodge Dakota, Ford Ranger, and Nissan Frontier are rated marginal, and the Chevrolet Colorado is rated poor in the side test, which simulates a side impact from an SUV or another pickup (see summary of ratings, attached).

"More people may be looking at small pickups because of rising gas prices," says Institute president Adrian Lund. "Unfortunately, they won't find many that afford state-of-the-art crash protection. Most earn dismal ratings for protecting people in side crashes, and all but the Tacoma and Frontier lack electronic stability control, which is a key feature in preventing crashes. Until they improve, most small pickups aren't good choices for people looking for safe transportation."

Tacoma earns the only good rating in side test: Performance in side tests is important because side impacts are the second most common type of fatal crash, killing nearly 9,000 occupants in 2006. The Tacoma's side airbags did a good job of reducing forces on the driver dummy and the passenger dummy in the back seat in the Institute's test. The curtain-style airbag that deployed from the roof above the side windows protected the dummies' heads from being struck by any hard structures, and the risk of significant injury to the head/neck and chest

— MORE —

was low. Measures recorded on the driver dummy indicate a fracture of the pelvis would be possible in a real-world crash of this severity. The Tacoma's structure held up reasonably well, preventing major intrusion into the occupant compartment.

The Tacoma also is rated good for frontal crash protection, but its seat/head restraints earn the second lowest rating of marginal for protection against whiplash in rear-end crashes. If Toyota improves the Tacoma's rear crash rating, this manufacturer would have the only two pickup models to earn the Institute's *TOP SAFETY PICK* award so far. The other is Toyota's Tundra, a large pickup truck.

The Tacoma is the only pickup in the group of small models that was tested with side airbags, which are optional in 2008 models. When side airbags are optional, the Institute's policy is to test a vehicle without the option. An auto manufacturer may request a second test with the airbags if the automaker reimburses the Institute for the cost of the vehicle. Manufacturers of the Dakota, Frontier, and Colorado didn't request second tests (side airbags aren't offered in the Ranger, even as options). The Tacoma was tested only with its optional side airbags, an exception to normal policy because such airbags will be standard in 2009 Tacoma pickups being shipped to dealers this month.

"We assume the other manufacturers don't expect their vehicles to perform much better, even with the optional side airbags," Lund says. "In contrast, Toyota is ahead of its competitors in making the latest safety equipment standard on small pickups. Consumers shouldn't have to choose safety from an options list, and they shouldn't buy any vehicle that isn't equipped with side airbags and electronic stability control."

In 2008 side airbags are standard in more than 65 percent of new vehicle models, and manufacturers have pledged to make such airbags standard across their fleets by the 2010 model year. A federal side impact standard that essentially will require side airbags goes into effect in the 2015 model year.

High death rates: Small pickup trucks have the highest driver death rates of any vehicles on the road, including minicars. In 2006 small pickups experienced 116 driver deaths per million registered vehicles 1-3 years old. This compares with 106 for minicars, 99 for small cars, and 42 for small SUVs. Part of the reason is that small pickup trucks are more likely than other passenger vehicles to be involved in single-vehicle crashes, especially rollovers.

Electronic stability control is a feature that can help prevent crashes, but it's not available on many pickups. It's standard on 12 percent of 2008 pickups, and it's not available at all on 67 percent. In contrast it's standard on 64 percent of cars and 95 percent of SUVs. The only pickups in this group of small models with available electronic stability control are the Tacoma and Frontier. Toyota has made this feature standard on the Tacoma starting with 2009 models.

"We would expect electronic stability control to significantly reduce the single-vehicle crash risk in small pickups," Lund says. "It's a lifesaving feature that should be standard on all of these vehicles."

Worst performer is the Chevrolet Colorado: Also sold as the GMC Canyon, this model was the only one to earn the lowest rating of poor in the Institute's side test. The driver dummy's head was hit by the top of the Institute's moving barrier during the impact. Plus the side structure of the Colorado allowed a lot more intrusion into the occupant compartment than the other pickups.

In addition to the side tests, new frontal offset crash tests were conducted for the Colorado and Dakota. While the Dakota earned a good rating, the Colorado is rated acceptable overall for occupant protection in frontal crashes. In the frontal test of the Colorado, intrusion by the tire and wheel into the driver footwell area combined with separation of the footwell from the doorsill trapped the driver dummy's left foot underneath the brake pedal. The pedal had to be cut off to free the foot. This entrapment resulted in a structural rating downgrade for the Colorado. Still, injury measures for the dummy's head, neck, and chest were low.

Back jump seats of Ranger aren't safe for children: All of the small pickup trucks the Institute recently tested, except the Ford Ranger, are crew cabs with bench seats in back. Instead of this, the Ranger is equipped with two side-facing jump seats too small for anyone but very small adults or children. This pickup's side rating of marginal applies only to front-seat occupants.

The Institute doesn't recommend riding in jump seats. Aside from lack of space, jump seats just have lap belts. A study conducted by the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia found that children riding in the small back seats of pickup trucks like the Ranger are about 4 times as likely to be injured in crashes as those in the back seats of other vehicles.

How vehicles are evaluated: The Institute's frontal crashworthiness evaluations are based on results of 40 mph frontal offset crash tests. Each vehicle's overall evaluation is based on measurements of intrusion into the occupant compartment, injury measures recorded on 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.

Side evaluations are based on performance in a crash test in which the side of a vehicle is struck by a barrier moving at 31 mph. The barrier represents the front end of a pickup or SUV. Ratings reflect injury measures recorded on two instrumented SID-IIIs dummies, assessment of head protection countermeasures, and the vehicle's structural performance during the impact.

Rear crash protection is rated according to a two-step procedure. Starting points for the ratings are measurements of head restraint geometry — the height of a restraint and its horizontal distance behind the back of the head of an average-size man. Seat/head restraints with good or acceptable geometry are tested dynamically using a dummy that measures forces on the neck.

**End 4-page news release on crashworthiness of small pickup trucks
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For more information go to www.iihs.org

ATTACHMENT 1: CRASHWORTHINESS EVALUATIONS, p.1 of 1

Small pickups	FRONT EVALUATION	SIDE EVALUATION	REAR CRASH PROTECTION	ELECTRONIC STABILITY CONTROL
<p>TOYOTA TACOMA Crew cab models WITH FRONT AND REAR HEAD CURTAIN AIRBAGS & FRONT TORSO AIRBAGS (OPTIONAL IN 2005-08 MODELS; STANDARD IN 2009 MODELS) front, side, and rear: 2005-08 models</p>	G	G	M	optional in 2005-08; standard in 2009
<p>DODGE DAKOTA MITSUBISHI RAIDER Crew cab models WITHOUT OPTIONAL SIDE AIRBAGS front, side, and rear: 2005-08 models</p>	G	M	A	unavailable
<p>NISSAN FRONTIER Crew cab models WITHOUT OPTIONAL SIDE AIRBAGS front, side, and rear: 2005-08 models</p>	G	M	P	optional
<p>FORD RANGER MAZDA B SERIES Extended cab models NO SIDE AIRBAGS AVAILABLE front and side: 1999-2008 models rear: 2006-08 models</p>	A	M	P	unavailable
<p>CHEVROLET COLORADO GMC CANYON Crew cab models WITHOUT OPTIONAL SIDE AIRBAGS front, side, and rear: 2004-08 models</p>	A	P	M	unavailable

G GOOD
A ACCEPTABLE
M MARGINAL
P POOR

**ORDER OF VEHICLES REFLECTS RATINGS IN FRONT, SIDE, AND REAR TESTS
FOR MORE DETAILED CRASHWORTHINESS EVALUATIONS, GO TO WWW.IIHS.ORG**

FRONTAL RATINGS are based on performance in a 40 mph frontal offset crash test into a deformable barrier. **CAUTION:** Frontal ratings cannot be compared across vehicle type and weight categories because the kinetic energy involved in the frontal test depends on the speed and weight of the test vehicle, and the crash is more severe for heavier vehicles. Given equivalent frontal ratings for heavier and lighter vehicles, the heavier vehicle typically will offer better protection in real-world crashes.

SIDE RATINGS are based on performance in a crash test in which the side of the vehicle is struck by a moving deformable barrier with a front end that represents the front of a typical SUV or pickup. The moving barrier strikes the vehicle at 31 mph in a perpendicular impact. **NOTE:** Side ratings can be compared across vehicle type and weight categories while frontal ratings cannot.

REAR CRASH PROTECTION RATINGS are based on a 2-step evaluation. In the first step restraint geometry is rated. Seats with good or acceptable geometric ratings then are subjected to a dynamic test. Seats with head restraints rated marginal or poor, based on geometry, aren't tested because they cannot protect taller occupants.