

# INSURANCE INSTITUTE FOR HIGHWAY SAFETY

## NEWS RELEASE

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## 27 WINNERS OF 2010 *TOP SAFETY PICK* AWARD NEW REQUIREMENT TO WIN IS GOOD RATING FOR PROTECTION IN ROLLOVERS

ARLINGTON, VA — Nineteen cars and 8 SUVs earn the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety's *TOP SAFETY PICK* award for 2010 (list on p.2). For the first time, good performance in a roof strength test to measure protection in a rollover is required to win. *TOP SAFETY PICK* recognizes vehicles that do the best job of protecting people in front, side, rear, and now rollover crashes based on good ratings in Institute tests. Winners also must have electronic stability control, which research shows significantly reduces crash risk. This is the second time the Institute has tightened criteria since announcing the first recipients in 2005.

Subaru is the only manufacturer with a winner in all 4 vehicle classes in which it competes. This automaker earns 5 awards for 2010. Ford and subsidiary Volvo have 6 winners, and Volkswagen/Audi has 5. Chrysler earns 4 awards, continuing a recent trend of improving the crashworthiness of its vehicles. Two new small cars, the Nissan Cube and Kia Soul, join the *TOP SAFETY PICK* list for 2010.

"With the addition of our new roof strength evaluation, our crash test results now cover all 4 of the most common kinds of crashes," says Institute president Adrian Lund. "Consumers can use this list to zero in on the vehicles that are on the top rung for safety."

**Good rollover ratings:** A new requirement for strong roofs winnows the list of *TOP SAFETY PICK* winners from a record 94 in 2009. The addition of this criterion recognizes manufacturers with vehicles that provide good protection in rollovers, which kill more than 9,000 people in passenger vehicles each year. The first rollover ratings were released in March. Vehicles rated good have roofs more than twice as strong

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## 2010 Winners

### Large cars

Buick LaCrosse  
Ford Taurus  
Lincoln MKS  
Volvo S80

### Midsized cars

Audi A3  
Chevrolet Malibu built after Oct. 2009  
Chrysler Sebring 4-door with optional ESC  
Dodge Avenger with optional ESC  
Mercedes C class  
Subaru Legacy  
Subaru Outback  
Volkswagen Jetta sedan  
Volkswagen Passat sedan  
Volvo C30

### Small cars

Honda Civic 4-door with optional ESC, except Si  
Kia Soul  
Nissan Cube  
Subaru Impreza except WRX  
Volkswagen Golf 4-door

### Midsized SUVs

Dodge Journey  
Subaru Tribeca  
Volvo XC60  
Volvo XC90

### Small SUVs

Honda Element  
Jeep Patriot with optional side thorax airbags  
Subaru Forester  
Volkswagen Tiguan



as the current federal standard requires. The Institute estimates that such roofs reduce the risk of serious and fatal injury in single-vehicle rollovers by about 50 percent compared with roofs meeting the minimum requirement.

"Cars and SUVs that win *TOP SAFETY PICK* are designs that go far beyond minimum federal safety standards," Lund points out.

**Missing the mark:** Not a single model from the world's biggest automaker by sales is represented among this year's winners. Toyota and its Lexus and Scion subsidiaries had a strong showing in 2009 with 11 winners but were shut out for 2010. Four other manufacturers whose vehicles have earned *TOP SAFETY PICK* in the past didn't have a

qualifying vehicle for 2010: BMW, Mazda, Mitsubishi, and Saab. The Honda Accord picked up the award the past 2 years, but the 2010 didn't earn the required good roof strength rating to qualify (the roof is rated acceptable). The Ford Fusion is another midsize car that dropped off the list for the same reason.

"Honda and Ford would have to make only minor changes to achieve good ratings for roof strength, as the Accord and Fusion just missed the mark," Lund explains.

The midsize Toyota Camry would have qualified with good ratings, except for its rear crash evaluation. This car's seats and head restraints are rated marginal for protection against whiplash injury. A change to good would have earned the Camry a *TOP SAFETY PICK* for 2010. Other automakers have improved head restraints to win. For example, inadequate head restraints kept earlier Chrysler models from earning awards, but in 2010 the Chrysler Sebring, Dodge Avenger and Journey, and Jeep Patriot all earn good ratings and *TOP SAFETY PICK*. Likewise, General Motors upgraded the seats and head restraints in the Chevrolet Malibu to win.

**Volvo glitch:** The Institute identified a problem with the Volvo XC60 in the side test. A piece of plastic trim on the driver seat pushed against a service release button for the safety belt, which then detached from its anchor during the test.

"This would be a serious issue if it happened in a real crash, but it's not likely to happen and it's fixable," Lund explains. "Still, belts shouldn't come loose in a crash test. Volvo is fixing the problem so it won't be an issue with XC60 models produced after November 2009. *TOP SAFETY PICK* applies only to these modified XC60s."

Consumers who own 2010 XC60s already on the road should see their Volvo dealer for repairs, Lund advises.

**Improved protection:** Front and side impacts and rollovers killed 24,056 passenger vehicle occupants in 2008. Rear-end crashes usually aren't fatal but result in a large proportion of crash injuries. Neck sprain or strain is the most commonly reported injury in two-thirds of insurance claims for injuries in all kinds of crashes.

"In safety terms, we've come very far, very fast in just the past decade," Lund says. "When the Institute began conducting frontal tests for consumer information in 1995, few vehicles earned top ratings. Now almost all do. Most cars failed the side tests we added in 2003. Test results in that initial round were so bad we nearly broke our budget for repairing the crash test dummy, but now most vehicles ace the side test thanks to side airbags and stronger side structures. Factor in improved head restraints to protect against whiplash and electronic stability control to prevent crashes, and consumers are the clear winners."

Safety equipment is increasingly standard. Ninety-two percent of 2010 model cars, 99 percent of SUVs, and 66 percent of pickup trucks have standard side airbags with head protection. Electronic stability control is standard on 85 percent of cars, 100 percent of SUVs, and 62 percent of pickups.

"Now that roof strength is a priority, we think manufacturers will move quickly to bolster roofs to do well in our roof strength test. This means consumers likely will have more *TOP SAFETY PICK* choices for 2011," Lund predicts.

Keep in mind vehicle size and weight, he adds, because larger, heavier vehicles generally afford better protection in serious crashes than smaller, lighter ones. Even with a *TOP SAFETY PICK*, a small car isn't as crashworthy as a bigger one.

The Institute awarded the first *TOP SAFETY PICK* winners to 2006 models and then raised the bar the next year by requiring good rear test results and electronic stability control as either standard or optional equipment. Early this year the Institute alerted auto manufacturers to the new criteria for roof crush and asked them to nominate candidates for testing.

**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 2 instrumented SID-IIIs dummies representing a 5th percentile woman, 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. This test simulates a collision in which a stationary vehicle is struck in the rear at 20 mph. Seats without good or acceptable geometry are rated poor overall because they can't be positioned to protect many people.

In the roof strength test, a metal plate is pushed against 1 side of a roof at a constant speed. To earn a good rating for rollover protection, the roof must withstand a force of 4 times the vehicle's weight before reaching 5 inches of crush. This is called a strength-to-weight ratio. For an acceptable rating, the minimum required strength-to-weight ratio is 3.25. A marginal rating value is 2.5. Anything lower than that is rated poor.

**End 5-page news release on 2010 *TOP SAFETY PICK* award winners  
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