

ROAD TO SAFETY

Take the Information Superhighway to Driving Safely

(NAPSA)—Whether you're thinking of buying a new car or just doing some research on your current one, the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has a Web site that can help in several ways.

Easy Access to Safety Ratings

One of the site's most convenient features is the 5 Star Crash Test and Rollover Ratings search engine. This online database lets you look up a vehicle by make, model and year to quickly access its safety rating. Ratings are based on a one- to five-star scale, with five being the highest. Since online test results go all the way back to 1990, this can also be the "go-to" place for those seeking information on used vehicles.

The ratings are determined by:

1. Frontal crash test: Crash-test dummies representing an average-sized adult are placed in driver and front passenger seats and secured with the vehicle's seat belts. Vehicles are crashed into a fixed barrier at 35 mph, which is equivalent to a head-on collision between two similar vehicles each moving at 35 mph.

2. Side crash test: Crash-test dummies representing an average-sized adult are placed in the driver and rear passenger seats (driver's side) and secured with the vehicle's seat belts. The side crash test represents an intersection-type collision with a 3,015-pound barrier moving at 38.5 mph into a standing vehicle.

3. Rollover ratings test: Rollover ratings starting with the 2004



You can discover what you need to know to drive a safe car at an ingenious Web site.

model year include the results of a recently implemented tipping test. Dubbed the "fishhook" for its serpentine design, this rigorous on-the-road safety test measures your chance of rollover and is the first of its kind to be conducted by a government agency. Rollover ratings for previous model years are based solely on a stationary test that measures how "top heavy" a vehicle is.

Defects and Recalls

In case you think your current car or truck has a defect, the site has a section where you can file a safety complaint, research ongoing investigations and check for recalls. Your online complaint submissions help lead to recalls and increase highway safety for everyone. In addition to reporting complaints about vehicles, vehicle equipment or tires, you can use this to file a complaint about a child safety seat. The site also provides useful information on rollover prevention, air bag safety and tire ratings.

To drive down your risk of danger on the road, you may care to check out www.safercar.gov.