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TITLE	Safety News Articles For The Week of August 13 – August 17, 2007	Originated: M. Hoffman Reviewed: H. Kato H. Kato Approved: C. Tinto	

Following is a summary of the articles from major news outlets pertaining to safety issues for the week of August 13, 2007. The articles are attached:

Summary

"GM To Replace SUV, Minivan Fuel Tanks" Article 1 *Detroit Free Press* (August 13, 2007):

- GM recalled 20,594 vehicles from 2001-2004 to replace fuel tanks that might leak & cause a fire.
- The recall includes some 2002-04 Chevrolet Venture minivans & Buick Rendezvous SUVs & 2001-04 Pontiac Aztek SUVs & Pontiac Montana minivans.

"Use Of Booster Seats Increases" Article 2 *Detroit Free Press* (August 13, 2007):

- More parents are beginning to buckle up their young children in car booster seats, NHTSA reported
- About 2 in 5 children 4-7 years old were buckled up in booster seats in 2006, higher than estimates
- 33% of the young children wore seat belts & another 17% used child safety seats.
- 9% did not wear a seat belt.

"Anti-Theft Key Required For New Cars" Article 3 *Toronto Star* (August 13, 2007):

- Transport Canada will require automakers to install ignition immobilizers in all new cars, vans, light trucks & SUVs built after Sept. 1.
- Car owners with the system can expect a discount on auto insurance.
- Transport Canada research indicates immobilizers can reduce car thefts by young people in particular
- In Manitoba, immobilizers will become mandatory in high-risk cars already on the road as of Sept. 1.
- After Sept. 1, all high-risk vehicles in Winnipeg must have immobilizers installed (at the province's expense) or the owners won't be able to renew their auto insurance.

"Car Buyers Give Toyota Lexus Top Score" Article 4 *AP Newswire* (August 14, 2007):

- US car buyers appear to be more satisfied with their purchases than ever, according to the University of Michigan's American Customer Satisfaction Index to be released Tuesday.
- The consumer satisfaction rate for vehicles rose 1 point this year to a score of 82 out of 100, a record
- Lexus, BMW, Buick, Cadillac, Lincoln & Mercury made the top of the list with Lexus on top.
- Japanese & Korean automakers saw their largest single-year drop in customer satisfaction since 1996.
- The Toyota brand dropped 3 points to 84
- The survey questioned approximately 11,312 people by telephone from April through June.

Attachments: Safety News Articles

"Lexus Safety Probe Widens: 40 Report Unintended Acceleration" Article 4 *Detroit Free Press* (August 15, 2007):

- NHTSA has stepped up an investigation into 98,454 Lexus ES 350 sedans
- There have been 40 reports of unintended acceleration, including 8 crashes & 12 injuries & cases in which drivers said their cars stopped only after an accident.
- Toyota told safety officials that the problem appeared to be caused by loose floor mats & contends that it dealt with the flaw through a mailing to customers earlier this year.
- NHTSA found an all-season floor mat that Lexus sold as an option in a majority of the cases it reviewed.
- Toyota told owners to not use the mat on top of the regular floor mats, & reminded them to check for proper installation.
- It also sent an orange warning sticker that owners were supposed to attach to the underside of the all-season mat.

"A Cause of Child Auto Deaths Draws Increased Attention" Article 4 *Wall Street Journal* (August 16, 2007):

- During 2002-2006, 474 children died after being backed over by a vehicle, compared with 138 from 1997 to 2001, according to Kids & Cars, a nonprofit consumer-advocacy group.
- The group says its estimates are based on police reports, media reports & lawyers & NHTSA.
- So far, NHTSA has few statistics of its own on such accidents
- NHTSA is continuing to gather statistics to better track backover accidents & it plans to work to improve the use of electronic detection systems that can be installed in vehicles to potentially help alert drivers
- Some advocates have called for the government to mandate the use of backover-detection systems.

"BMW Series 5 Performs Worst In US Side-Impact Crash Test" Article 5 *AP Newswire* (August 16, 2007):

- The 2008 BMW 5 Series was the worst performer in new side-impact tests of luxury sedans by IIHS.
- The Acura RL, Kia (000270.SE) Amanti & Volvo S80 all earned the highest safety rating
- The Cadillac STS & Mercedes E-Class earned the 2nd-highest rating.
- The air bags in the BMW protected the head, but air bags designed to protect the chest & abdomen performed poorly
- The Kia Amanti was one of the lowest priced sedans in the group but it offered more protection than more expensive entries.
- The Volvo S80 also won the top safety award for overall crash protection, since it got the highest ratings in front, side & rear crash tests & has electronic stability control as standard equipment.

Monday 13-Aug-2007

8/10 Toyota close: 119.33 (-0.46)
Yen/Dollar: 118.53 (+0.33)

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GM to replace SUV, minivan fuel tanks
Detroit Free Press 08/11/2007
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General Motors Corp. recalled 20,594 SUVs and minivans from the 2001 to 2004 model years to replace fuel tanks that might leak and cause a fire.

The recall includes some 2002-04 Chevrolet Venture minivans and Buick Rendezvous SUVs and 2001-04 Pontiac Aztek SUVs and Pontiac Montana minivans, GM told the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

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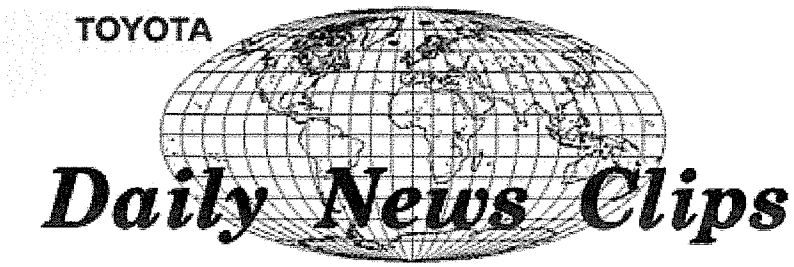

Monday 13-Aug-2007

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Yen/Dollar: 118.53 (+0.33)

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Use of booster seats increases
Detroit Free Press 08/13/2007
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More parents are beginning to buckle up their young children in car booster seats, the government reported Friday.

About two in five children between the ages of 4 and 7 were buckled up in booster seats in 2006, according to data released by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. It was higher than previous estimates of booster-seat use.

The government recommends car seats for children up to 40 pounds and booster seats for children more than 40 pounds until they are 8 years old or 4-foot-9. All children should ride in the back seat until age 13.

Beyond the 41% using booster seats, the survey found that 33% of the young children wore seat belts and another 17% used child safety seats. Nine percent did not wear a seat belt.

"Restraint use is much better than we expected it to be, and we can build off of that," said the safety agency's administrator, Nicole Nason. "Parents have an interest in keeping their children in their seats longer."

Free Press staff and news services

Toyota: External Affairs

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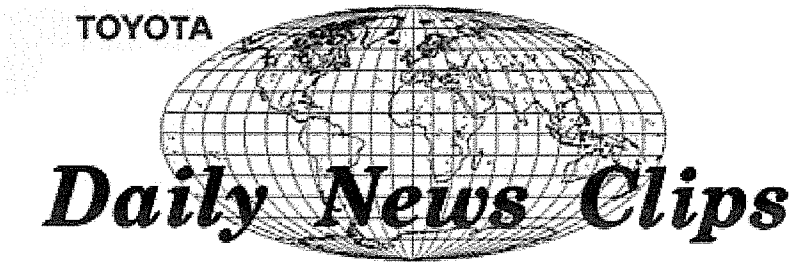

Monday 13-Aug-2007

8/10 Toyota close: 119.33 (-0.46)
Yen/Dollar: 118.53 (+0.33)

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Anti-theft key required for new cars
Transport Canada hopes computer-chip 'disabler' will put the brakes on joyriders, in particular
Toronto Star 08/13/2007
Author: Tracy Huffman
Copyright (c) 2007 The Toronto Star

About every three minutes, a car is stolen in Canada.

It is a crime wave that costs drivers $1.2 billion a year.

Now Transport Canada will require automakers to install ignition immobilizers – an anti-theft system – in most vehicles built after Sept. 1.

"The department believes that the immobilization systems, which make it difficult for the car engine to be started without the proper disabling device, will reduce theft," said Jessie Chauhan, a Transport Canada spokesperson.

The anti-theft devices will be mandatory in all new cars, vans, light trucks and SUVs, she said.

"This is a major effort to reduce auto theft," said Rick Dubin, investigative-services chief for the Insurance Bureau of Canada.

Car owners with the system, which prevents startup of a vehicle unless the engine computer recognizes the computer chip in the ignition key, can expect a discount on auto insurance.

"Savings can be as high as 25 per cent on the comprehensive section of a policy," Dubin said.

Why were 159,000 vehicles stolen in Canada last year?

Joyriding accounted for half the thefts, but about 30,000 vehicles get shipped abroad each year by Canadian auto theft rings tied to organized crime. Others are sent to "chop shops" and broken down for parts, Dubin said.

Transport Canada research indicates immobilizers can reduce car thefts by young people in particular, said Chauhan. "Studies have demonstrated that an average of 244 to 345 serious injuries will be prevented and 11 lives will be saved every year as a result."

"We know immobilizers make vehicles harder to steal," Dubin said.

In Manitoba, immobilizers will become mandatory in high-risk cars already on the road as of Sept. 1.

The province, which has Canada's highest per-capita auto theft rate, has encouraged drivers to install immobilizers for three years, offering discounts on insurance and later picking up the $280 installation tab for numerous high-risk models.

And it's working, said Brian Smiley of Manitoba Public Insurance. "For the first seven months of 2007, auto theft is down 26.3 per cent" compared to last year.

"Unlike other provinces, the vehicles here are not being stolen for their value. They are stolen for a joyride," he added.

After Sept. 1, all high-risk vehicles in Winnipeg must have immobilizers installed (at the province's expense) or the owners won't be able to renew their auto insurance.

SPECIALS

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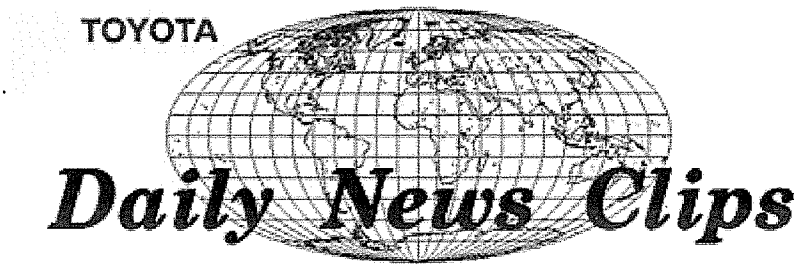

Tuesday 14-Aug-2007

8/13 Toyota close: 119.40 (+0.07)
Yen/Dollar: 118.22 (-0.31)

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Car Buyers Give Toyota Lexus Top Score
Associated Press Newswires 08/14/2007
Author: Dee-Ann Durbin
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DETROIT (AP) -- U.S. car buyers appear to be more satisfied with their purchases than ever, despite some quality stumbles by Asian brands, according to a survey released Tuesday.

The consumer satisfaction rate for vehicles rose 1 point this year to a score of 82 out of 100, a record in the 12-year history of the University of Michigan's American Customer Satisfaction Index.

Toyota Motor Corp.'s luxury Lexus had a score of 87. Rounding out the top performers with scores of 86 were BMW, General Motors Corp.'s Buick and Cadillac, and Ford Motor Co.'s Lincoln and Mercury brands.

The survey noted that Japanese and Korean automakers saw their largest single-year drop in customer satisfaction since 1996. The **Toyota** brand, in particular, dropped 3 points to 84, which the survey blamed on increasing vehicle recalls and poor customer service.

Claes Fornell, head of the index, said U.S. automakers are narrowing the gap with their Asian rivals but they're still behind. Chrysler's Jeep, for example, was the worst performer in the survey, with a score of 75.

In July, domestic brands saw their sales drop below 50 percent of the U.S. market for the first time in history. **Toyota** surpassed GM in global vehicle sales for the first half of the calendar year, selling 4.72 million vehicle to GM's 4.67 million. Many analysts believe **Toyota** will likely beat GM for the full year in both sales and production.

Still, **Toyota**'s troubles give domestic brands an opening, Fornell said.

"I think some people would be surprised at this because after all, **Toyota** is highly regarded," he said, adding that **Toyota** is aware of the difficulties. "If you grow at this level all the time, it's simply more difficult to make sure everything is done all right."

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In the survey, people who bought cars within the past three years were asked to rate their satisfaction level compared with their expectations. They also were asked to rate how their vehicle compares with the ideal vehicle, and to rate their overall satisfaction.

The survey questioned approximately 11,312 people by telephone from April through June. It had a margin of error of plus or minus 1 point when rating the entire industry and 2 points on individual manufacturers, Fornell said.

AP Auto Writer Tom Krisher in Detroit contributed to this report.

- GM, Ford satisfy more car buyers - The Detroit News 08/14/2007
- Buyers rate GM, Ford high - Detroit Free Press 08/14/2007
- Small rise in U.S. customer satisfaction: survey - Washington Post 08/14/2007
- US Auto Customers Report High Satisfaction With Their Cars - Associated Press Newswires 08/14/2007
- Toyota's customer satisfaction takes a hit - MarketWatch 08/14/2007
- Customer satisfaction ticks higher: survey - Reuters News 08/14/2007

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Wednesday 15-Aug-2007

8/14 Toyota close: 117.99 (-1.41)
Yen/Dollar: 117.77 (-0.45)

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Lexus Safety Probe Widens: 40 report unintended acceleration
Detroit Free Press 08/15/2007
Author: Justin Hyde
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Federal regulators have stepped up an investigation into 98,454 Lexus ES 350 sedans after amassing 40 reports of unintended acceleration, including eight crashes and 12 injuries, along with cases in which drivers said their cars stopped only after an accident.

Toyota Motor Co. told safety officials that the problem appeared to be caused by loose floor mats and contends that it dealt with the flaw through a mailing to customers earlier this year. But the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration decided to continue its investigation last week to verify whether **Toyota**'s efforts were sufficient.

Sudden acceleration problems carry a unique stigma in the U.S. auto industry, due to the collapse of the Audi brand in the late 1980s following a "60 Minutes" report alleging runaway vehicles. Federal safety officials later cleared Audi, but it took years for the company to clear its name with customers.

While some auto safety advocates maintain that several models still suffer from sudden acceleration, NHTSA has investigated hundreds of such complaints over the past two decades but rarely found any defects. Most of the complaints have been blamed on drivers mistaking the accelerator for the brake.

But in the Lexus investigation, NHTSA verified several of the complaints. One driver told the agency the vehicle had hit speeds of 100 m.p.h. over a 6-mile stretch of freeway due to the problem. A Michigan woman said the problem caused her to lose control of her Lexus, triggering a rollover crash on I-75 that totaled her car. NHTSA does not release the names of people who file complaints.

NHTSA found an all-season floor mat that Lexus sold as an option in a majority of the cases it reviewed. The rubber mat was sold as a replacement for the standard mats and should be secured by clips to the car's carpet. If left unclipped and installed over the regular mats, it can slide under the accelerator pedal.

In its letter sent in April, after NHTSA launched its investigation, **Toyota** told owners to

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not use the mat on top of the regular floor mats, and reminded them to check for proper installation. It also sent an orange warning sticker that owners were supposed to attach to the underside of the all-season mat.

As an option, the ES 350 offers an engine start-stop button instead of a traditional key. Some drivers tried to shut off the engine by pressing the button as the car accelerated, but without success. **Toyota** said that once the engine is running, owners must hold the button down for at least 3 seconds to shut it off in an emergency.

NHTSA's decision last week to upgrade its investigation to an engineering analysis means that it will review **Toyota**'s mailings and perhaps solicit information from other automakers.

Lexus spokesman Greg Thome said that the company does not believe any safety defect exists with the ES 350 and that it was cooperating with NHTSA.

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Thursday 16-Aug-2007

8/15 Toyota close: 115.26 (-2.73)
Yen/Dollar: 116.69 (-1.08)

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A Cause of Child Auto Deaths Draws Increased Attention
Some Say Tall SUVs Worsen The Problem of 'Backovers'; Regulators Step Up Research
The Wall Street Journal 08/16/2007
Author: Jonathan Welsh
(Copyright (c) 2007, Dow Jones & Company, Inc.)

Many people are familiar with the perils children face in cars, from poorly installed booster seats to a lack of safety features in older vehicles. But they often overlook a significant danger outside the vehicle.

Sometimes, drivers injure or kill children by accidentally backing over them. And often, the driver is the victim's parent, pulling out of a driveway.

Such tragedies are getting increased attention, with federal regulators planning more research into prevention, and consumer organizations contending that the problem is on the rise. From 2002 to 2006, 474 children died after being backed over by a vehicle, compared with 138 from 1997 to 2001, according to Kids and Cars, a nonprofit consumer-advocacy group. The group, which is funded largely by private donations, says its estimates are based on police reports, media reports and tips from lawyers, as well as discussions with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

So far, the NHTSA, the federal agency that oversees vehicular safety, has few statistics of its own on such accidents, because the incidents occur mostly on private property. However, late last year the agency published a report at the behest of Congress on backovers -- and the use of electronic-sensing technologies to possibly prevent them. NHTSA officials say they have combined information from federal crash records with death-certificate reports and other data to develop rough estimates of at least 183 fatalities annually caused by drivers striking pedestrians while backing up. As many as 7,419 injuries, many relatively minor, result from backover crashes per year, the agency says.

The report said that the NHTSA doesn't have evidence that the problem is on the rise. But it did find that the backup-detection technology available in cars today "is expensive, unreliable and gives drivers a false sense of security," says NHTSA spokesman Rae Tyson. The agency is continuing to gather statistics to better track backover accidents. And it plans to work to improve the use of electronic detection systems that can be installed in vehicles to potentially help alert drivers to backovers.

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Many consumer advocates and parents believe the problem of backover accidents is exacerbated by the way vehicles are designed. Taller SUVs and crossovers with big rearward blind spots are increasingly popular. Also, most cars today have high trunks and small rear windows that don't allow drivers to see certain obstacles close behind them. Very young children are simply not tall enough to be seen out of the back window of many of today's vehicles.

Some advocates, including Janette Fennell, founder of Kids and Cars in Leawood, Kan., have called for the government to mandate the use of backover-detection systems.

[redacted] says her daughter [redacted] would probably be alive today if her uncle's pickup truck had a rear-view camera. The Cedartown, Ga., mother of four says her 2-year-old darted behind the truck as it was backed out of the driveway at a family gathering in late 2005.

However, she says that while electronics can help drivers avoid accidents, the biggest contributing factor may be parents' denial. "They really think it can't happen to them," says [redacted] "It's like a syndrome."

Technology Not Ideal

The NHTSA notes that backup-technology systems are marketed largely as parking aids and are not an ideal way of detecting small children behind a vehicle. The agency -- which plans to continue to research the potential of such technology -- conducted a number of tests in which children were placed behind vehicles equipped with a variety of rear-sensing devices. In many instances the equipment failed to detect the children. "It was scary," Mr. Tyson says.

Last year's NHTSA report was a follow-up to a similar report about 10 years ago. The first one focused more on commercial trucks -- and the bulk of available detection equipment came from aftermarket sources and had to be added to a vehicle after purchase. Now, the emphasis of the agency's inquiries has shifted to passenger vehicles, where detection technology is increasingly available on cars and SUVs directly from auto makers.

Still, the technology has been relatively slow in coming to market and the vast majority of passenger cars lack rear-view cameras. One reason is that, while back-up cameras themselves are relatively inexpensive -- costing about $300 to $600 -- they are typically available only when buyers also order a much costlier satellite navigation system. That's because navigation systems come with dashboard-mounted screens that also work with the camera. With a satellite system costing as much as $2,000, many shoppers skip both options.

Toyota Motor Corp. is one manufacturer trying to overcome the sticker shock by offering backup cameras either with or without navigation systems on its recently redesigned Tundra pickup truck and **Highlander** SUV. But a **Toyota** spokesman notes that rear-mounted sensors were designed mainly to warn of the proximity of another car's bumper or other large obstacles while parking, rather than to detect small children.

Parking Aids

Nissan Motor Co., too -- which installed division installed rear-view cameras on its 2002 model Infiniti Q45 sedan as part of a package with a navigation system -- says the

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cameras and sensors on its vehicles are parking aids and aren't meant to detect children.

Ford Motor Co. offers a rear-view camera system -- bundled with other options -- on its 2008 Ford F-Series Super Duty, F-150, Expedition, Lincoln Mark LT and Navigator. Ford spokeswoman Tara Martin says the company doesn't consider its rear-view cameras and rear sensors as safety features, but as conveniences for parking and towing.

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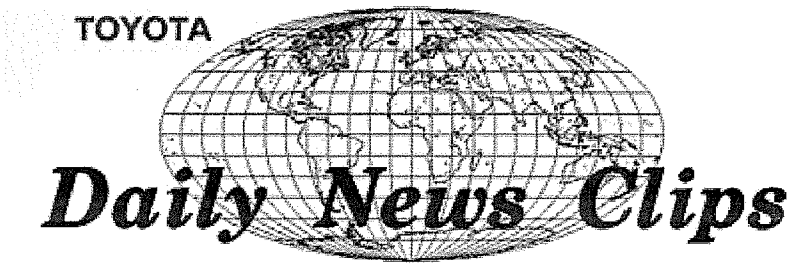

Thursday 16-Aug-2007

8/15 Toyota close: 115.26 (-2.73)
Yen/Dollar: 116.69 (-1.08)

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BMW Series 5 Performs Worst In US Side-Impact Crash Test
Associated Press Newswires 08/16/2007
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DETROIT (AP)--The 2008 BMW 5 Series was the worst performer in new side-impact crash tests of luxury sedans by the U.S. insurance industry.

The Acura RL, Kia (000270.SE) Amanti and Volvo S80 all earned the highest safety rating from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, according to results released Thursday. General Motor's (GM), Cadillac STS and Mercedes E-Class earned the second-highest rating.

The tests were designed to show what would happen if a truck or sport utility vehicle hit the side of the sedan at 31 miles per hour, the speed of a serious crash. Side-impact crashes are the most common type of fatal crash after a frontal crash, killing around 9,000 people in 2005, the institute said.

"Growing sales of SUVs and pickups have exacerbated height mismatches among passenger vehicles, thereby increasing the risks to occupants of many vehicles struck in the side," Insurance Institute President Adrian Lund said in a news release.

All six sedans were equipped with standard side air bags. The air bags in the BMW 5 Series protected the head, but separate air bags designed to protect the chest and abdomen performed poorly, the institute said.

BMW (BMW.XE) spokesman Thomas Plucinsky said the institute's test indicated the 5 Series has a strong body structure but the dummy was injured when it was hit by the arm rest. Plucinsky said BMW does up to 12 crash tests on all its cars as well as computer simulations of crashes.

"The issue is that depending on the location of seat, the location of dummy, the location of the sled, the results could change," he said. "This was one test on one day on one car."

The Kia Amanti was one of the lowest priced sedans in the group, with a starting price of around $25,500, but it offered more protection than more expensive entries. The BMW 5 Series starts at $43,500 while the Mercedes E-Class starts at $50,550, according to

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Edmunds.com.

"The Amanti shows that you don't have to buy an expensive car to get good protection in crashes with SUVs and pickups," Lund said.

Ford Motor's (F) Volvo S80 also won the institute's top safety award for overall crash protection, since it got the highest ratings in front, side and rear crash tests and has electronic stability control as standard equipment. Stability control helps prevent rollovers.

All of the sedans tested were 2007 models except the 5 Series, which was redesigned for 2008, institute spokesman Russ Rader said.

- Crash test results - Detroit Free Press 08/16/2007

Toyota: External Affairs

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