

Remarks prepared for

David Strickland

Administrator

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

5-Star Safety Ratings Press Event

Washington, DC

October 5, 2010

Thank you Secretary LaHood.

From its first frontal crash tests in the late 1970s to the enhanced 5-Star Safety Ratings we're rolling out today, NHTSA's New Car Assessment has been the gold standard for new vehicle buyers for over 30 years. With this program, consumers have been able to compare how well vehicles perform in a crash to protect them and their families. The more stars, the safer the car.

The enhancements we've rolled out today, raise the bar on safety for the future automobile and for the protection of the American Public.

So what are some of the changes?

Beginning with the 2011 model year, earning a 5-Star Safety Ratings became that much tougher. New vehicles must provide better protection.

We've added a side pole crash test. This test simulates a car or truck crashing sideways into a narrow object like a utility pole or a tree. We want cars and trucks to offer better head protection in these kinds of real-world crashes.

To learn more about injuries that can occur in frontal and side crash tests, we've upgraded our family of test dummies. We're now using improved crash test dummies of differing sizes that tell us better information about potential injuries. We added small-sized adult female dummies and a new medium-sized adult male dummy.

As part of the frontal crash tests, we'll be collecting injury data on additional areas of the body, including head, chest, neck, and legs.

That injury data will help us strengthen the information we provide to consumers so they can have a more comprehensive view of the relative safety of a new vehicle.

One of the most significant changes is the addition of an Overall Score for each vehicle tested. We responded to feedback we received from consumers who wanted to know how vehicles rated overall.

The Overall Score combines the results of the frontal crash test, side crash tests and rollover resistance tests and compares those results to the average risk of injury and potential for rollover of other vehicles. You can use this score to compare two vehicles for overall relative safety as long as the two vehicles are in the same weight class and are within 250 pounds of each other.

Another way to compare vehicles is using the new information on crash avoidance technologies. Standard on some vehicles and optional on others, these systems help you control your vehicle to avoid a potential crash from occurring in the first place. We believe these technologies will save lives and we want you to consider vehicles that offer them.

Beginning now, with the 2011 model year vehicles, we will promote the safety advantages of three systems. The three crash-avoidance systems are: electronic stability control (ESC), forward collision warning (FCW), and lane departure warning (LDW) systems.

We will continually add technologies to our recommendations as these technologies develop and prove themselves.

With today's rollout, we've completely revamped a program that has been around for 30 years. So, I'd like to remind Consumers that even if a new car or truck is not initially rated under the enhanced 5-Star Ratings, all vehicles for sale in the United States must be certified by

the manufacturer to meet all Federal motor vehicle safety standards.

Because the enhanced 5-Star Safety Ratings provides you with safety information for vehicles tested with different test conditions, different test dummies, and different injury criteria, never compare star ratings from the old and new systems to each other. Safety ratings for a model year 2010 vehicle cannot be compared to those of a model year 2011 vehicle.

I urge consumers to visit SaferCar.gov and learn all about the program. We want to help you buy the safest car for you and your family. The more stars, the safer the car.

We'll take your questions now. ###