SaferRoads
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Supporter Newsletter

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Used Car Safety Ratings

Last month we reported on the July ANCAP results. In this newsletter, we take a look at the recently released Used Car Safety Ratings.

The latest Used Car Safety Ratings (UCSR) were released on 11 August 2004. Some of the *Saferroads* partners are part of the consortium that funds the UCSR, which has analysed and rated 255 vehicles built between 1982 and 2002. The ratings combine data from more than 1.5 million on-road crashes which resulted in over 400,000 drivers injuries. The UCSR rates vehicles according to the level of occupant protection they provide, and also their likelihood to inflict harm on others.

The latest UCSR have found that 73 older models of vehicles rate above the overall fleet average in protection for their driver in crashes. The report also found that 55 models had below average protection for their drivers. If you drive one of the worst performing vehicles, you face at least a 30 per cent greater chance of serious injury or death if you were in a serious crash than if you were in the best vehicle.

It is just as important to look at occupant protection when choosing a second hand car as it is when buying a new one. If everyone drove the top performing vehicles in their class there would be a dramatic reduction in the road toll. The Used Car Safety Rating is available from www.mynrma.com.au/motoring and also www.racv.com.au

"The Future is here and we are it"

The following is an extract from "Making Cars Safer for Pedestrian", by James Motavalli, New York Times, 12/9/2004 www.nytimes.com.

"It is a dark, moonless night, and the jogger on the road is wearing dark clothing. You do not see him, but your car does." Infrared cameras on your bumper that computer to sound a warning then automatically applies the brakes, as safety belts are tightened in anticipation of an impact. But with the car slowed to a crawl, the crash never comes and a tragedy is averted.

Such technology is not yet available on cars sold to the public, but it exists. Many of the safety features involve passive systems like Daimler-Chrysler's M-B 2006 S Class sedan which will have a softer "deformable" hood which will rise at the rear in a crash. Active safety systems, such as fiber-optic and radar sensors, exterior cameras and outside airbags that would deploy instantly when an accident occurs –or even before it takes place, are also within reach.

Honda's current (US model) Accord's windscreen wipers absorb energy when struck, it has hood hinges that bend on impact and spaces that allow the hood and bumpers to deform, cushioning the blow.

Siemens of Germany has developed a bumper-mounted fibre-optic system that within 3 milliseconds determines whether a vehicle has hit a person or an object such as a lamppost and within a further 30 to 60 milliseconds raises the rear of the hood several inches to create a catching device to absorb energy.

European and Japanese auto manufacturers will be introducing these pedestrian-protection features commencing in 2005, initially with passive systems such as redesigned hoods and bumpers. The active systems will follow. Consumer demand will determine the speed of the introduction of this new technology. However the onus still remains for drivers to be on the lookout for pedestrians.

Coming Events

The ACT Chapter of the ACRS in conjunction with the NRMA Road Safety Trust – **Drugs and Driving** workshop, 21 October 2004 9am to 1pm at the National Museum. Guest speaker will be Paul Dillon from the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre. Contact Errol Jobsz at ejobsz@optusnet.com.au for more details.