

7 Cars Get Top Rating in High-Tech Safety Test

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The Associated Press

New York (AP) — Seven midsize vehicles earned the top rating in a new insurance industry test of high-tech safety features designed to prevent front-end collisions.

The Cadillac ATS and SRX, Subaru Legacy and Outback, Mercedes C-Class and Volvo S60 and XC60 won "superior" ratings in tests by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.

The institute tested 74 midsize cars and SUVs from the model years 2013 and 2014. Those equipped with front collision-warning and automatic braking systems generally scored better. The systems can either warn the driver or automatically stop the car if they sense a potential collision.

The institute IIHS, a nonprofit research group funded by insurance companies, has pushed federal regulators and automakers to require or offer as an option new safety systems such as antilock brakes. The group also is pushing automakers to bolster front-end crash resistance.

Automakers have been offering the frontal-crash systems on more and more models as the price of the technology falls. The systems use radar, cameras, ultrasonic sensors and computers to spot objects in front of cars and determine if a collision is possible. A driver may be warned to take action, or the system may apply the brakes itself.

The IIHS said its data institute has determined that the devices help drivers avoid frontal crashes, but even so, auto insurance companies generally aren't offering discounts for people who buy them.

Insurance companies say that as the systems become more popular in certain models, insurance claims will decline. Those models eventually will see discounted rates.

In the tests, six other cars got second-best "advanced" ratings, while 25 received "basic" ratings. Another 36 got no rating because they didn't have the systems or their systems didn't meet the institute's standards.

The institute says the tests will help people decide which features to buy and encourage automakers to adopt the new technology faster.

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