

# INSURANCE INSTITUTE FOR HIGHWAY SAFETY

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## FLIMSY BUMPERS ON LARGE PICKUPS & SMALL SUVs DON'T RESIST DAMAGE; SIX OF SEVEN VEHICLES TESTED EARN LOWEST POSSIBLE BUMPER RATINGS

ARLINGTON, VA – Many cars have bumpers that prevent some of the damage that otherwise can lead to expensive repairs after low-speed collisions, the kind that occur in commuter traffic and parking lots. But this isn't the case for most sport utility vehicles and pickup trucks. In a recent series of low-speed crash tests involving four large pickups and three small utility vehicles, all but one of the seven vehicles allowed excessive damage. The series of four crash tests conducted at 5 mph by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety are front- and rear-into-flat-barrier plus two localized impacts, front-into-angle-barrier and rear-into-pole.

### 5 MPH CRASH TEST RESULTS

	Front Into Flat Barrier	Rear Into Flat Barrier	Front Into Angle Barrier	Rear Into Pole	Total Damage 4 Tests	Average Damage Per Test
<b>2001 MODEL LARGE PICKUPS</b>						
Chevrolet Silverado	\$766	\$885	\$2,094	\$516	\$4,261	\$1,065
Ford F-150	\$1,168	\$1,187	\$1,143	\$1,661	\$5,159	\$1,290
Toyota Tundra	\$1,400	\$1,458	\$2,297	\$1,889	\$7,044	\$1,761
Dodge Ram	\$2,074	\$1,546	\$2,344	\$2,059	\$8,023	\$2,006
<b>2001 MODEL SMALL SUVs</b>						
Ford Escape	\$265	\$552	\$651	\$472	\$1,940	\$485
Hyundai Santa Fe	\$501	\$1,399	\$1,390	\$1,859	\$5,149	\$1,287
Toyota RAV4	\$1,540	\$2,713	\$970	\$2,789	\$8,012	\$2,003

Repair costs reflect February 2001 prices.

Note about Dodge Ram: After the low-speed tests were conducted, Dodge lowered the prices of several crash parts. The repair costs shown above reflect these very recent crash parts price reductions.

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**Large pickups are poor across the board:** In the Institute's 5 mph tests, "the performances of the four large pickup trucks ranged from poor to awful," says Adrian Lund, the Institute's chief operating officer. "None of these vehicles sustained less than \$4,000 total damage in the four tests, and the Dodge Ram sustained more than \$8,000 damage. There's no excuse for such poor performances."

Damage to the Dodge Ram in the least demanding of the four impacts, front into flat barrier, included not only extensive damage to the bumper system but also to the grille, hood, air conditioner condenser, and radiator support. Two other pickups, the Toyota Tundra and Ford F-150, turned in very poor performances in another frontal impact, the 5 mph angle barrier test. Neither the Tundra nor F-150 could be driven after this impact because their front bumpers ended up lodged against the tires.

"These pickups may look tough," Lund notes, "but they're clearly not tough at all when it comes to preventing damage in low-speed crashes."

**One of three SUVs has acceptable bumpers:** Only the Ford Escape, a small SUV introduced for the 2001 model year, turned in an acceptable performance in the Institute's bumper tests. It's "the only vehicle in this round of tests with halfway decent bumpers," Lund says. The other two SUVs tested, Hyundai's Santa Fe and Toyota's RAV4, turned in very poor performances.

Toyota touts the RAV4's "rugged bumpers" in advertising. But as Lund points out, "this claim is about as far from true as you can get. The RAV4's bumpers collapsed in impacts at only 5 mph and allowed huge damage. In fact, the damage to the 2001 RAV4 exceeded the total damage to the predecessor version of this SUV, a 1998 model." The earlier RAV4 design sustained \$5,656 damage in the same series of bumper tests, compared with \$8,012 for the redesigned model.

Most of the damage to the RAV4 occurred in the two rear impacts, flat barrier and pole. Like a lot of SUVs, this one has a spare tire mounted on the tailgate, and the tire extends beyond the bumper. "This design, which is predominantly for

styling reasons, guarantees excessive damage and high repair costs from a whole range of rear-end collisions," Lund says. He emphasizes that, with the RAV4, "there's really not much of a rear bumper at all. There's just an exterior molding without a reinforcement bar or any material to absorb the energy of the impact."

**Parts prices are very high:** Repair costs after the 5 mph crash tests are determined by the cost of the replacement parts and/or labor to make the necessary repairs — and some of the parts are priced very high. On the RAV4, the cost of the replacement tailgate glass after each rear impact was \$700, "and that's for the part alone, not counting what it costs to install," Lund points out. The Dodge Ram's overall repair cost would have been even higher than \$8,023 except that, in part because of the Institute tests, the manufacturer dropped the price of the rear bumper assembly from \$595 to \$450. Fender and hood prices also were reduced.

"Manufacturers tell potential buyers they can drive these pickups and SUVs anywhere adventure leads them. But consumers can expect big repair bills if they're unlucky enough to bump their so-called rugged vehicles into something at slow speeds," Lund concludes.

**End 3-page release on bumper performance in crash tests  
Video news release Monday, April 9, 2001, 1-1:30 pm EDT  
(C) Telstar 6/Transponder 8; crash test footage and more**

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