

# NEWS RELEASE

Insurance Institute for Highway Safety



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## **IIHS pushes improvements in crash avoidance with 2026 awards**

ARLINGTON, Va. — The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety is pushing automakers to improve their crash avoidance systems and demanding superior protection for back seat passengers in the 2026 award season.

Even with tougher rules, 63 vehicles qualify for IIHS awards so far. That is up from 48 at the same point last year. Of the winners, 45 earn a *TOP SAFETY PICK+* and 18 earn a *TOP SAFETY PICK*. Many of these vehicles start below \$30,000, showing that strong safety does not have to come with a high price tag.

“This year, we’re asking automakers to make excellent protection for back seat passengers the norm,” IIHS President David Harkey said. “For *TOP SAFETY PICK+*, we’re requiring crash avoidance systems that are better at preventing pedestrian crashes as well as higher speed crashes with other vehicles.”

The Institute updated its moderate overlap front test in 2022 to emphasize back seat safety. Last year, vehicles needed a good rating in this test to earn *TOP SAFETY PICK+* but only an acceptable rating to earn *TOP SAFETY PICK*. For 2026, a good rating is required for either award.

The crash avoidance requirements for the base award are the same as last year — an acceptable or good rating in the pedestrian front crash prevention test. For *TOP SAFETY PICK+*, however, vehicles must earn a good rating in that test and an acceptable or good rating in the updated vehicle-to-vehicle front crash prevention evaluation that was introduced last year. In another change, qualifying front crash prevention systems must be standard for either award in 2026.

As before, good ratings in the small overlap front and side tests are required for both awards, and all trims must come with acceptable- or good-rated headlights.

This year’s winners include a variety of models, ranging from small cars to large pickups and from economy cars to luxury vehicles. The manufacturer suggested retail prices for more than a dozen *TOP SAFETY PICK+* winners start under \$30,000, with the Kia K4 starting at just \$22,290.

SUVs of different sizes make up 35 of the 45 total *TOP SAFETY PICK+* winners and 12 of the 18 *TOP SAFETY PICK*s. The cheapest small SUV is the Hyundai Kona, which starts at \$25,500. While all three large SUVs cost more than \$55,000, several midsize SUVs have base prices under \$40,000.

No minicars, minivans or small pickups earn awards this year. Only two large pickups qualify: the Tesla Cybertruck and Toyota Tundra crew cab. For many other models in these categories, back seat performance in the moderate overlap test remains a challenge.

“It’s disappointing that minivans continue to struggle to provide the best-available protection for passengers in the back, considering that these are supposed to be family vehicles,” Harkey said. “Based on these results, parents may want to consider some of the more affordable sedans and SUVs that earn awards.”

The biggest change in the award criteria is the addition of the new vehicle-to-vehicle front crash prevention test. The original evaluation, which was discontinued in 2022, focused on rear-end crashes at lower speeds using only a passenger car target. The new evaluation includes test runs at 31, 37 and 43 mph (50, 60 and 70 kilometers per hour). In addition to a passenger car target, it examines performance with a motorcycle target and a semitrailer.

Though the test was not required for an award last year, more than 70% of the 85 model year 2025 vehicles evaluated earned acceptable or good ratings. So far, more than 77% of 2026 models tested meet that standard. These results show that automakers are making fast progress in crash prevention technology.

“Improving crash avoidance is key to achieving our **30x30** vision of reducing U.S. crash deaths by 30% by 2030,” Harkey said. “Stronger structures and better seat belts save lives, but the safest crash is the one that never happens.”

More details about how the vehicle-to-vehicle front crash prevention evaluation and other required tests are conducted can be found in the [“About our tests”](#) section of the IIHS website. This resource also includes information about additional tests that are not yet included in the award criteria.

**Award winners** (model year 2026 unless otherwise noted)

**2026 TOP SAFETY PICK+**

**G**

Good ratings in the small overlap front test, moderate overlap front test and side test

**A G**

Acceptable or good headlights (standard availability)

**G**

Good rating in the pedestrian front crash prevention test (standard availability)

**A G**

Acceptable or good rating in the vehicle-to-vehicle front crash prevention test 2.0 (standard availability)

<b>Small cars</b>	Kia K4 Mazda 3 hatchback Mazda 3 sedan Nissan Sentra	
<b>Midsized cars</b>	Hyundai Sonata Toyota Camry	
<b>Midsized luxury car</b>	Audi A5	
<b>Large luxury car</b>	2027 Audi A6 Sportback e-tron Genesis G80 built after June 2025	
<b>Small SUVs</b>	Genesis GV60 Honda HR-V Hyundai Ioniq 5 Hyundai Kona Hyundai Tucson	Kia Sportage built after May 2025 Mazda CX-30 Mazda CX-50 Subaru Forester
<b>Midsized SUVs</b>	Honda Passport Hyundai Ioniq 9 Hyundai Santa Fe Kia EV9 Kia Sorento built after September 2025 Mazda CX-70	Mazda CX-70 PHEV Mazda CX-90 Mazda CX-90 PHEV Nissan Murano Nissan Pathfinder Subaru Ascent Subaru Outback
<b>Midsized luxury SUVs</b>	Audi Q5 Audi Q5 Sportback 2027 Audi Q6 e-tron 2027 Audi Q6 Sportback e-tron BMW X3 BMW X5	Genesis Electrified GV70 Genesis GV70 Genesis GV80 Infiniti QX60 Lexus NX
<b>Large SUVs</b>	Rivian R1S Volvo EX90	
<b>Large pickup</b>	Tesla Cybertruck	

**2026** TOP SAFETY PICK

**G**

Good ratings in the small overlap front test, moderate overlap front test and side test

**A G**

Acceptable or good headlights (standard availability)

**A G**

Acceptable or good rating in the pedestrian front crash prevention test (standard availability)

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<b>Small cars</b>	Honda Civic hatchback Hyundai Elantra Toyota Prius
<b>Midsize car</b>	Honda Accord
<b>Midsize luxury car</b>	Mercedes-Benz C-Class
<b>Midsize SUVs</b>	Buick Enclave Ford Explorer Ford Mustang Mach-E Volkswagen Atlas Volkswagen Atlas Cross Sport
<b>Midsize luxury SUVs</b>	Lincoln Nautilus Mercedes-Benz GLC Volvo XC90 Volvo XC90 Plug-in Hybrid
<b>Large SUVs</b>	Audi Q7 Infiniti QX80 Nissan Armada
<b>Large pickup</b>	Toyota Tundra crew cab

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**For more information, go to [iihs.org](https://www.iihs.org)**

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) is an independent, nonprofit scientific and educational organization dedicated to reducing deaths, injuries and property damage from motor vehicle crashes through research and evaluation and through education of consumers, policymakers and safety professionals. IIHS is wholly supported by auto insurers.