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Popular pickups fail IIHS seat belt reminder test

ARLINGTON, Va. — Pickups are falling short when it comes to effective seat belt reminders. Out of 10 recently evaluated by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, only one — the Toyota Tundra crew cab — earns a good rating, while five are rated poor.

“National belt use observations show that people driving or riding in pickups are less likely to buckle up than occupants of other vehicles, so effective reminders are especially important for these vehicles,” says IIHS President David Harkey. Nearly a third of pickup occupant deaths in 2020 occurred in rollover crashes, in which seat belt use plays a key role because of the risk of ejection.

IIHS [launched](#) a new ratings program in March to encourage manufacturers to improve their seat belt reminders.

Federal standards specify that seat belt reminders must include an audible signal that lasts for 4-8 seconds total and a visual alert that lasts at least 60 seconds when the driver’s seat belt is unbuckled at ignition. However, [previous IIHS research](#) has shown that more noticeable and persistent alerts could increase belt use among those who do not routinely buckle up by as much as 34 percent, preventing around 1,500 fatalities a year.

“This is a solvable problem,” Harkey says.

To earn a good rating from IIHS, a seat belt reminder system must generate an audible signal and visual alert on the dashboard display, overhead panel or center console when the vehicle is moving at least 6 mph and the system detects an unbelted occupant in the driver or passenger seat or the unfastening of a second-row belt that was previously buckled.

Along with other specifications, the audible alert must be loud enough to be heard over the background noise in the vehicle cabin and last at least 90 seconds. A visual indicator must show second-row belt use when the driver starts the vehicle, and an audible and visual reminder lasting at least 30 seconds is required when a fastened second-row belt is unbuckled.

Of the pickups evaluated — all crew cab versions — only the Tundra meets all those requirements.

Two small pickups, the Hyundai Santa Cruz and Nissan Frontier, satisfy the requirements for the front row but only earn an acceptable rating because neither vehicle features a second-row reminder.

Five of the 10 vehicles tested are rated poor: the Chevrolet Colorado, Chevrolet Silverado, Ford F-150, Ford Maverick and Ford Ranger. Most of these pickups have front-row reminders that are loud enough, but all are shorter than 8 seconds in duration — the minimum length needed for a marginal rating.

The Ram 1500 and Toyota Tacoma each earn marginal ratings. Both vehicles meet the volume and frequency requirements for the front-row belt reminder. However, at only 30 seconds in duration, the Tacoma’s reminder is too short. The Ram 1500’s reminder does not begin soon enough when a front occupant is unbuckled at the 25 mph test speed.

Seat belt reminder ratings for small and large pickups, 2022 models

	Rating	2nd row reminder	
		Available?	Meets IIHS requirements?
Toyota Tundra crew cab	G	✓	✓
Hyundai Santa Cruz crew cab	A	✗	✗
Nissan Frontier crew cab	A	✗	✗
Ram 1500 crew cab	M	✗	✗
Toyota Tacoma crew cab	M	✗	✗
Chevrolet Colorado crew cab	P	✗	✗
Chevrolet Silverado crew cab	P	✗	✗
Ford F-150 crew cab	P	✓	✗
Ford Maverick crew cab	P	✓	✗
Ford Ranger crew cab	P	✓	✗

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.