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Contact: Joe Young +1 434 985 9244 (office) or +1 504 641 0491 (cell)

Toyota Sienna's seat belt reminders stand out among minivans

ARLINGTON, Va. — When it comes to seat belt reminders, the 2023 Toyota Sienna sets a high bar for the family-oriented minivan segment.

Among the four minivans tested, the Sienna is the only vehicle to earn a good rating in the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety's [seat belt reminder evaluation](#). Three other 2023 minivans, the Kia Carnival, Chrysler Pacifica and Honda Odyssey, earn acceptable, marginal and poor ratings, respectively.

Along with meeting the stringent IIHS requirements for the front seating positions, the Sienna is the only minivan with reminders for the second row. The Sienna stands out for another reason, however. It is also equipped with comparable third-row reminders, which is not yet required for a good rating.

“Effective seat belt reminders are especially important for minivans, since the owners of these vehicles often buy them specifically because they have young children,” said IIHS Senior Research Scientist David Kidd, who led the development of the seat belt reminder rating program. “While some of its competitors are falling short, Toyota deserves credit for going above and beyond.”

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.

Seat belt reminders for the rear seating positions can help drivers ensure that the children they are transporting are safely buckled — which can be difficult to monitor from the driver seat. In 2020, more than a third of children ages 4-12 who were killed in crashes were unrestrained. Children in this age group are the most likely to be seated in the back and to be using vehicle seat belts instead of harness-equipped restraints.

In a [survey](#) conducted by IIHS a decade ago, more than 80 percent of drivers who regularly transported children said they would want rear belt reminders. Few vehicles had them at the time, but today that has changed — at least for most vehicle classes. Including the newly rated minivans, about half of the 82 vehicles that IIHS has evaluated for belt reminders since the program began last year have them in the second row, though only 25 have rear reminders that meet the Institute's criteria.

To earn a good rating, 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 for unbelted front occupants 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 four minivans IIHS evaluated, only the Sienna comes with front and second-row reminders that meet all the requirements for a good rating. The third row, which is not factored into the rating, has the same reminders as the second row.

The Carnival satisfies the requirements for the front row but only earns an acceptable rating because of the missing second-row reminder.

The Pacifica earns a marginal rating. The front-row reminder failed to start within the required two seconds after the vehicle reached 25 mph. The audible tone also wasn't loud enough to be effective over the ambient noise inside the vehicle.

The Odyssey earns a poor rating because its front-row reminder lasts less than 8 seconds.

Neither the Pacifica nor the Odyssey have second-row reminders.

Seat belt reminder ratings for minivans, 2023 models

	Rating	2nd row reminder	
		Available?	Meets IIHS requirements?
Toyota Sienna	G	✓	✓
Kia Carnival	A	✗	✗
Chrysler Pacifica	M	✗	✗
Honda Odyssey	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.