



Safest 2011 Car Models

by Elizabeth Smith, J.D., M.A.

Every year, the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) selects a number of qualified vehicles for its list of **Top Safety Picks**. To receive this highly coveted ranking, a vehicle must pass a number of demanding performance and reliability tests. For example, officials check to see if each vehicle can adequately protect the driver and passengers during all types of basic [accidents](#), including front, rear, side and rollover crashes.

In 2010, a new qualifying criterion was added that requires all listed vehicles to pass roof strength tests ([tied to rollover accidents](#)).

Top Picks Grouped by Size

Sixty-six different vehicles made the 2011 Top Safety Picks List. They were grouped in the following categories: Minicars, Minivans, Small Cars, Midsize Cars, Midsize SUVs, Large Cars, Large SUVs and Large Pickups. More “[small cars](#)” made the list in 2011 than any others. The chosen vehicles are listed alphabetically for consumers, based on size.

Vehicle Manufacturers with the Largest Number of 2011 Models on the List

Both Hyundai/Kia and Volkswagen/Audi managed to get a total of *nine* different models on the 2011 list. However, Ford/Lincoln, General Motors and Toyota/Lexus/Scion all celebrated

having eight of their models make the list. Not to be outdone, Subaru gained a unique victory by having five of its models qualify as Top Safety Picks, one in every category in which the automaker chose to compete.

The Different Types of Assigned Rankings

Although every car manufacturer hopes each of its models will be awarded the coveted “good” rating, vehicles can also be assigned overall rankings of “acceptable,” “marginal” and “poor.” The year 2011 is especially notable since every major car manufacturer scored one or more winning models.

Some vehicle models have been shut out for years, including the Ford Explorer. However, 2011 marks the first year that this vehicle was ranked as a Top Safety Pick. This higher rating is probably due to the Explorer’s greatly improved roof-strength. Ford has clearly gotten the message about improving this feature since it also saw its Lincoln MKT, Ford Fusion and Ford Flex models obtain top 2011 rankings. Ford’s Fiesta even managed to score the only 2011 Top Safety Pick in the minicar category.

Perhaps one of the most unique ratings was won by the Chevrolet Cruze which features 10 different airbags, including one specially designed for the knees. Consumers seem to be very interested in this model since it offers good gas mileage in a safe small car. Volkswagen also scored a special victory with its 2011 model Touareg model. It was the only large SUV to receive a Top Safety Pick rating this year.

Automakers Still Face Major Safety Challenges in the Future

Although great strides in safety have been made during the past few years, car manufacturers still have many challenges, especially in the small pickup category. None of the trucks tested in this group were chosen as top safety picks in 2011. Consumers are urged to read more about the various tests run by the IIHS so they can make better choices when deciding which new models they’d like to purchase or drive in the near future. ([Visit the IIHS Web site](#)).

Demas & Rosenthal remains one of Sacramento's most highly respected and accomplished personal injury law firms. We've been successfully representing clients for almost twenty years. Every Demas & Rosenthal attorney takes great pride in obtaining the full compensation and complete justice owed to every client. Elizabeth Smith, J.D., M.A., is a successful freelance writer who has written about general health, safety, legal, medical and business topics for over twenty years. She has also served as the author and co-author of two professional legal texts.