

Crash Test Dummies

You may have noticed when shopping for a new vehicle that each one has a safety rating and information available about government safety tests. Most safety ratings are the direct result of [crash](#) tests using anthropomorphic test devices, better known as crash test dummies. These dummies have been developed and improved over the last 60 years to respond like a human body during a crash.

In 1949, the U.S. Air Force funded the development of the first test dummy for use while testing their aircraft ejection seats. Previous testing had been done using human volunteers until testing became too dangerous. The [automotive](#) industry, which was using results from cadaver studies at the time, began developing and using their own crash test dummies. The new dummies were initially used to develop lap and shoulder seat restraints. Over the years, crash dummies have changed in form and size to include male and female versions in adult and child sizes. The sensors inside crash dummies have allowed very sophisticated computer analysis of [crash effects](#) with some data being measured thousands of times per second!

[Crash](#) dummies have been integral in developing safety features found on most vehicles on the road today including seat & shoulder belts, head restraints, airbags, antilock brakes and traction control. Modern vehicles also sport various passive safety features built into the frame. Newer safety developments are more about crash avoidance including forward collision and lane departure warning systems.

Obviously, these dummies have been working hard. They may not for much longer, however, as developments in computer software and analysis may make the dummies obsolete. For over sixty years, though, crash test dummies have been irreplaceable for auto makers and others in advancing new safety systems.

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