

## ***Insurance Times***: Small SUVs perform poorly in insurance crash tests

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WASHINGTON (AP) — Bumpers on three of four small sport utility vehicles performed poorly in 5 mph crash tests performed by the insurance industry.

The 2002 models of the Honda CR-V and Land Rover Freelander performed the worst. The Honda sustained a total of \$6,607 in damage and the Freelander \$6,470 in four separate crash tests by the Arlington, Virginia-based Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. Also getting a poor rating was the 2002 Saturn VUE, which suffered \$ 3,389 in damage.

The only vehicle in the batch to get a "good" rating was the redesigned 2003 Subaru Forester, which sustained only \$1,421 in damage.

The ratings — good, acceptable, marginal and poor — are based on how much damage is done to the bumper and other parts of the vehicle. The low-speed testing is designed to imitate the impacts that often occur in commuter traffic and parking lots:

The Freelander and the CR-V have a spare tire mounted on the tailgate that extends beyond the bumper. When the vehicles were stuck from behind, the tire was driven into the rear body.

Land Rover spokesman Bill Baker said the Freelander is made of premium materials and has a complex design that makes it more expensive to repair, but the cost is comparable to other luxury vehicles.

"Our first concern with the design of any Land Rover is protection for the vehicle occupants during a crash situation," he said. "While crashworthiness, four-wheel drive system capabilities, overall utility and cost of repairs are related, occupant safety always comes first."

Honda spokesman Art Garner similarly said, "The top priority has got to be passenger protection. In the CR-V's case, it's got the highest five-star rating that the government gives."

"We wish we had done better in the IIHS test, and we're going to take a look at that," he said, "But the top priority has got to be passenger safety and that's certainly where the CR-V shines."

The 2003 Subaru Forester owed its "good" rating to energy-absorbing foam in the front and rear bumpers. The Forester also has two aluminum bars to absorb energy, while most vehicles have just one.