

Government 5-Star Safety Ratings:

Advertising and Communication Usage Guidelines

To promote accurate characterization and comparison of the new Government 5-Star Safety Ratings and use of information relating to advanced crash avoidance technologies that meet government performance criteria, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has released the following guidelines for manufacturers and advertising agencies. These guidelines apply to print, web, TV, and radio advertisements, as well as press releases and various other consumer-based marketing communications.

Frontal Crash Safety Ratings

Frontal crash safety ratings for the driver seating position should be listed separately from frontal crash safety ratings for the (right-front) passenger seating position. The star ratings from the two front seating positions should not be added together. For example, a 5-star rating for the driver seating position should not be added to a 5-star rating for a right front passenger seating position to create a 10-star frontal crash safety rating.

Manufacturers may use a phrase similar to the following when describing a vehicle with a 5-star driver frontal rating: “received the highest Government frontal crash safety rating for the driver.” If the frontal crash safety rating for the driver seating position is to be shown, results for the right-front passenger also should be shown, and vice versa.

For vehicles receiving a 5-star overall frontal crash safety rating, manufacturers may use a phrase similar to the following:



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5-Star Safety Ratings

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“received the highest Government frontal crash safety rating,” or “achieved a 5-star overall frontal crash safety rating.”

NHTSA strongly discourages the use of terms such as “double” 5-star rating when a vehicle has received a 5-star rating for both the driver and the right-front passenger seating positions.

NHTSA will provide an overall frontal crash safety rating on SaferCar.gov and encourages the use of this overall rating in advertising. An overall crash safety rating is the quickest way to communicate a vehicle’s safety to consumers for a crash type. For vehicles receiving an overall 5-star frontal crash safety rating, it should be made clear that the overall rating is for frontal crash safety and is not the *Overall Vehicle Score*. (See *Overall Vehicle Score* section.)

Side Crash Safety Ratings

The side barrier crash safety rating for the front seating position should be listed separately from the side barrier crash safety rating for the rear seating position. The ratings for the front and rear seating positions should not be added together. For example, a 5-star rating for the front seating position should not be added to a 5-star rating for a rear passenger seating position to create a 10-star side barrier crash rating.

If the side barrier star rating for the front seating position is to be shown, results for the rear seating position should also be shown, and vice versa.

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For vehicles receiving a 5-star overall side barrier crash safety rating, manufacturers may use a phrase similar to the following: “received the highest Government safety rating for side barrier crash test.” For vehicles receiving a 5-star side pole crash safety rating for the front seating position, manufacturers may use a phrase similar to the following: “received the highest Government safety rating for side pole crash test.” If the side barrier crash safety rating is promoted by itself, the side pole crash safety rating also should be provided; if the side pole crash safety rating is promoted by itself, the side barrier crash safety rating should be provided.

NHTSA strongly discourages the use of terms such as “double” 5-star rating when a vehicle has received a 5-star rating for both front and rear seating positions in the side barrier crash test.

NHTSA combines both of the side impact tests to create side impact ratings for the front and rear seating positions. A side impact rating that combines the front seat’s performance in both the side barrier and side pole tests is called the front seat side impact rating. Manufacturers may use a phrase similar to the following when describing a vehicle with a 5-star front seat side impact rating: “received the highest Government side crash safety rating for the front seat.” Likewise, manufacturers may use a phrase such as the following to describe a vehicle with a 5-star rear seat side impact rating: “received the highest Government side crash safety rating for the rear seat.” If the front seat side impact rating is to be shown, the rear seat side impact rating also should be shown, and vice versa.

In instances when a vehicle receives a 5-star overall side rating, which results from combined scores for the side impact barrier test and side pole test for both front and rear seating positions, manufacturers may use a phrase similar to the following: “received the highest Government side crash safety rating,” or “achieved a 5-star overall side crash safety rating.”

NHTSA will provide an overall side crash safety rating on SaferCar.gov and encourages the use of this overall rating in advertising. An overall crash safety rating is the quickest way to communicate a vehicle’s safety to consumers for a crash type. For vehicles receiving an overall 5-star side crash rating,

it should be made clear that this overall side crash safety rating is not the *Overall Vehicle Score*. (See *Overall Vehicle Score* section.)

For those vehicles tested with side air bags (SABs), a phrase similar to “model tested with optional/standard side air bags (SABs)” should appear in the body of the advertisement or as part of a voiceover.

For those tested vehicles that have been deemed by NHTSA to have differences between the left and the right side that affect performance, advertisements should have a phrase such as “rating applies only to the driver-side seating position.” For vehicles that have significant equipment choices, such engine/power source choices, and where NHTSA has deemed that the rating is limited only to a particular configuration, advertisements should have a phrase such as “rating only applies to vehicles with [specify equipment].”

Rollover Safety Ratings

Manufacturers may use a phrase similar to the following when describing a vehicle with a 5-star rollover rating: “received the highest Government rollover rating.” However, rollover advertising that involves a vehicle that has a “tip-up” rating on SaferCar.gov should prominently include mention of the “tip-up.”

Overall Vehicle Score

NHTSA encourages the use of the “*Overall Vehicle Score*” in advertising. Use of the term “*Overall Vehicle Score*” applies **only** to a vehicle’s overall rating, which is a combination of the overall ratings from the **frontal and side crash tests — and rollover resistance**. Therefore, the term “*Overall Vehicle Score*” should only be applied to a vehicle’s overall rating and not to ratings for a specific test type, i.e. frontal crash ratings and side crash ratings.

Avoid Misleading Terminology

NHTSA strongly discourages the use of language referring to “doubling,” “tripling” or “quadrupling” of a star rating as doing so implies the vehicle scored a star rating two, three or four times that of another vehicle. This is misleading to consumers.

NHTSA strongly discourages the use of potentially misleading words such as “perfect,” “safest,” “flawless” or “best in class” to describe the star rating received by the vehicle. More acceptable phrases to describe a vehicle receiving a 5-star rating would include phrases such as “highest” or “maximum” safety rating or “top” safety rating or score.

Proper Seating Terminology

NHTSA encourages manufacturers to use terminology for seating positions that is consistent with seating terminology used by NHTSA. NHTSA considers the use of the term “occupant” to be misleading, since it is unclear whether the term refers to the driver or a passenger. Accordingly, manufacturers are encouraged to use the terms bolded in the paragraph below and not the term “occupant.”

- Seating positions for frontal crash tests are typically referred to as **driver** and **(right-front) passenger** seating positions.
- Seating positions for side barrier crash tests are typically referred to as **front** and **rear (passenger)** seating positions.
- Seating positions for the side pole crash test are typically referred to as **front** seating positions.

The words in parentheses may be used to provide additional clarity to the consumer.

Competitive Comparisons

Advertisements that competitively compare frontal crash star ratings or the *Overall Vehicle Score* of two or more vehicles should occur only if the vehicles being compared are within 250 pounds of each other and within the same vehicle class. Comparisons for frontal crash ratings or the *Overall Vehicle Score* should not be implied between vehicles where the difference in weight exceeds 250 pounds or the vehicles are of different body styles (e.g., comparisons between a sedan and an SUV, even if of similar mass).

Comparisons of frontal crash results or the *Overall Vehicle Score* may be made across weight categories (e.g., comparing a heavy passenger car to a medium passenger car), as long as the 250 pound comparison limit is not exceeded.

Side barrier, side pole, side overall and rollover resistance ratings may be compared to one another regardless of vehicle weights or vehicle body styles.

Mid-Year Changes

Manufacturers who make a mid-model year running change to a vehicle that has already been rated, for safety concerns or any other reason, should indicate in the advertisement that the revised star rating applies only to vehicles manufactured on or after the date of the running change or alternatively to vehicles beginning with a given Vehicle Identification Number (VIN). Safety concerns identified by NHTSA should continue to be clearly stated and prominently displayed directly beneath, or after, the star rating in the body of the advertisement for all model years where the safety concern appears on SaferCar.gov.

Crash Avoidance Technologies

As a part of the Government 5-Star Safety Ratings System, NHTSA is providing consumers with information on effective crash avoidance technologies that can help reduce the risk of vehicle crashes. The technologies that are being identified as beneficial by NHTSA are electronic stability control (ESC), forward collision warning (FCW) systems and lane departure warning (LDW) systems.

Vehicles that are equipped with electronic stability control and meet NHTSA’s performance criteria may be promoted by advertisers in their advertising. Vehicles that are equipped with forward collision warning or lane departure warning systems recommended by NHTSA may also be promoted by advertisers in their advertising. Please use one of the following phrases, as applicable:

- “(Insert car make and model) is equipped with electronic stability control that meets the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s performance criteria.”
- “(Insert car make and model) is equipped with a forward collision warning system recommended by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.”
- “(Insert car make and model) is equipped with a lane departure warning system recommended by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.”

- “(Insert car make and model) is equipped with (electronic stability control/forward collision warning/and or lane departure warning) systems that are recommended by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.”

Each advertisement referencing crash avoidance technologies that meet NHTSA’s performance criteria should have the following phrase in the Attribution Statement:

“Information about crash avoidance technologies as part of the Government 5-Star Safety Ratings System can be found at www.SaferCar.gov.”

See “Attribution Statement” for additional information that should appear in all advertisements using the Government 5-Star Safety Ratings.

Voiceovers

The language used in voiceovers during TV commercials should be consistent with the display/image of the star rating(s) used in the advertisement.

Corporate Twins

Each year, manufacturers provide NHTSA with a list of vehicles they have identified as “corporate twins.” If the vehicle manufacturer has notified NHTSA that a vehicle is a “corporate twin” of another vehicle, then the appropriate frontal/ side/ rollover star safety ratings, or *Overall Vehicle Score*, may be applied to all those vehicles defined as corporate twins of one another. When a vehicle’s star safety ratings and test results are released and it has any corporate twin, the star safety ratings and test results for that vehicle and all of its twins will be updated simultaneously on the SaferCar.gov website with the appropriate star safety ratings and test scores.

Attribution Statement

Each advertisement using the Government 5-Star Safety Ratings should have one of the following attribution phrase(s), as applicable:

- “Government 5-Star Safety Ratings are part of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s (NHTSA’s) New Car Assessment Program (www.SaferCar.gov)”

- “Government 5-Star Safety Ratings are part of the U.S. Department of Transportation’s New Car Assessment Program (www.SaferCar.gov).”

For advertisements on the Web, the attribution may appear as a pop-up during a mouse-over.

Advertisers **should not** use quotes from the NHTSA Administrator or any other Federal employee. Only safety ratings or scores, language suggested by these guidelines, and the attributions should be used.

Government 5-Star Logo

The Government 5-Star logo may be used in an advertisement (print, web or TV), along with star safety ratings, safety score, or crash avoidance technologies that meet NHTSA performance criteria (per the guidelines outlined in this document), provided the logo is displayed in immediate proximity to the star ratings, safety score, or technology so as to indicate that the Government’s association with the advertisement is limited to the star ratings, safety score, or technology, and not to the contents of the entire advertisement.

Each advertisement or TV spot that incorporates the Government 5-star logo with the star safety ratings, safety scores, and/or crash avoidance technologies that meet NHTSA’s performance criteria must be submitted to NHTSA’s Office of Communications and Consumer Information for review with an expected turnaround time of 1-2 work days.

Preferred file formats for submission of materials are as follows:

- **Print advertisements:** screen resolution PDFs
- **Radio spots:** script in MS Word or text file format
- **Television spots:** DVD or electronic file (Windows Media Player or QuickTime compatible)
- **Web advertisements:** HTML or flash type file, or link to an externally accessible website.

The logo is shown below and the preferred logo colors are Blue: C80, M68, Y36, K19.



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Crash Test Photos and Video Clips

Vehicle crash test photos and video clips are available for use in an advertisement to supplement vehicle safety features or crash test ratings. NHTSA's interactive vehicle crash test database provides many options for finding vehicle specific test photos and video clips. In most cases, running a **query by vehicle parameters** such as make, model and year will produce the best results. Entering test query criteria should yield photos, videos, and reports for the particular vehicle searched.

If you have trouble producing results, try broadening your search criteria (e.g. use an earlier model year for the intended vehicle since all models are not tested yearly). Please note that the database only includes multimedia for crash tests conducted in recent years.

This database can be accessed by visiting:

<http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/database.aspx/vehdb/querytesttable.aspx>

NHTSA can also make available raw footage and B-roll of crash tests. Requests for access to this footage can be sent to Mike Joyce in NHTSA's Office of Communications and Consumer Information at (202) 366-5600, or by e-mail at:

Mike.Joyce@dot.gov.

For questions regarding photos and video clips please contact Johanna Lowrie in NHTSA's Office of Crashworthiness

Standards at (202) 366-5269, or by e-mail at:

Johanna.Lowrie@dot.gov.

Crash Test Results Timing

Crash test ratings and scores should not be used in an advertisement until they are posted to www.SaferCar.gov.

The same applies for crash avoidance technologies that must meet NHTSA's performance criteria.

For questions regarding the status of a crash test, please contact Johanna Lowrie in NHTSA's Office of Crashworthiness Standards at (202) 366-5269, or by e-mail at:

Johanna.Lowrie@dot.gov.

Miscellaneous

NOTE: Manufacturers have expressed an interest in promoting safety ratings on the interior or exterior of vehicles (e.g., by use of hang tags or static cling stickers) during the interim period before NHTSA publishes a final rule revising the safety ratings section of the Monroney label. Manufacturers choosing to do so may wish to make use of decal templates available for download on SaferCar.gov or the following phrases:

"This vehicle has been tested under the new Government 5-Star Safety Ratings program. For complete safety ratings information please visit www.SaferCar.gov."

OR

"Please visit www.SaferCar.gov for more complete safety ratings information and details about the new Government 5-Star Safety Ratings program."

OR

"This vehicle has been tested under the new Government 5-Star Safety Ratings program and cannot be compared to Model Year 2010 and earlier vehicles. Some ratings on this vehicle can only be compared with similar ratings on certain Model Year 2011 vehicles. Please visit www.SaferCar.gov for more information."



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