

Redesigned for the 2000 model year to provide more advanced occupant restraint features, the Ford Taurus has optional side airbags designed to protect drivers' and front passengers' heads and chests. Front airbags are designed to deploy at one of two force levels, depending on crash severity, seat belt use, and position of the driver seat. Front shoulder belts include crash tensioners designed to prevent slack from allowing excessive forward movement in a crash and devices to limit belt forces on occupants. Adjustable brake and accelerator pedals, antilock brakes, and daytime running lights are optional. (The daytime lights are available only on cars sold to fleets.)

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety has evaluated the crashworthiness of the Ford Taurus, based primarily on performance in a 40 mph frontal offset crash test into a deformable barrier. Head restraint and bumper designs are evaluated separately:

STRUCTURE/SAFETY CAGE: GOOD There was minimal intrusion into the driver footwell area and minimal rearward movement of the instrument panel.

RESTRAINTS/DUMMY KINEMATICS: ACCEPTABLE Dummy movement was reasonably well controlled. However, the dummy's head contacted the steering wheel through the airbag. Then the dummy rebounded into the seat.

INJURY MEASURES: GOOD Measures taken from the head, neck, chest, and both legs indicate low risk of injury to these body regions. Head acceleration from the steering wheel contact was low.

OVERALL EVALUATION: GOOD The driver space was maintained well in the frontal offset crash test. Dummy movement was reasonably well controlled, and dummy measures indicate that significant injury was unlikely. Standard dual-stage front airbags and belt crash tensioners as well as optional side airbags with head protection, adjustable pedals, and daytime running lights are pluses.