

Redesigned for the 2000 model year, the Nissan Maxima has optional side airbags (standard in Infiniti I30) designed to protect drivers' and front passengers' heads and chests. 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. Front seats in I30 models have "active" head restraints designed to move up and forward to cradle occupants' heads in low-speed rear impacts. Antilock brakes are standard.

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety has evaluated the crashworthiness of the Nissan Maxima, based primarily on performance in a 40 mph frontal offset crash test into a deformable barrier. This model and all 2000 and later Maxima and I30 models manufactured after November 1999 include structural and airbag modifications to improve occupant protection in frontal crashes. (Note: information about when a specific vehicle was manufactured is on the certification label typically affixed to the car on or near the driver door.) Head restraint and bumper designs are evaluated separately:

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

RESTRAINTS/DUMMY KINEMATICS: GOOD Dummy movement was well controlled. During rebound, the top of the head contacted the roof rail in front of the B-pillar.

INJURY MEASURES: BOTH LEGS POOR Measures taken from the head, neck, and chest indicate low risk of injury to these body regions. Head acceleration from the roof rail contact was low. However, forces on the both tibias indicate the likelihood of lower leg injuries.

OVERALL EVALUATION: ACCEPTABLE The driver space was maintained reasonably well in the frontal offset crash test, although footwell intrusion contributed to the likelihood of leg injuries. Side airbags with head protection (standard in I30, optional in Maxima), standard belt crash tensioners, and active head restraints (I30 models) are pluses.