



ADVOCATES
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Advocates Call for Upgrading the U.S. New Car Assessment Program (NCAP)

U.S. NCAP is out of date and outpaced by existing technology, and by NCAPs in other nations.



WASHINGTON – Auto safety leaders today marked the 40th anniversary of the U.S. New Car Assessment Program (NCAP) with an event on Capitol Hill celebrating the program's past successes and calling for a number of important improvements. U.S. NCAP was the first government program to provide the public with comprehensive auto safety ratings, including crash test results. Changes outlined in a [new report](#) released at today's [press conference](#) would significantly enhance the program and provide more current and robust safety ratings for new cars.

Joan Claybrook, former Administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and one of the founders of Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates), discussed essential changes to the program she helped create 40 years ago. "An upgraded U.S. NCAP will help consumers understand which new cars are truly the safest on the market," Claybrook said. "A mere shell of its former self, NCAP is easily manipulated by auto makers seeking a five-star rating, which is nearly irrelevant today because of a reliance on outdated metrics and insufficient types of tests. As a result, consumers are ill-served by a program that at one time provided invaluable auto safety information. What we have learned over the 40-year history of NCAP, is that automakers will respond to tougher, more comprehensive ratings by manufacturing safer vehicles."

It is vital that Congress and NHTSA act upon the following recommendations to modernize U.S. NCAP:

- 1) Boosting pre-crash performance by incorporating proven crash avoidance technologies such as automatic emergency braking, lane departure warning and blind spot detection;

- 2) Modernizing and enhancing crash tests;
- 3) Augmenting safety for pedestrians, bicyclists and other road users;
- 4) Adding a “silver” rating for older motorist safety issues; and,
- 5) Improving public access to NCAP ratings.

Cathy Chase, President of Advocates, said, “We are now at a moment in NCAP’s history when its ratings are stuck in the past and in urgent need of upgrading. When families walk into a car dealership, they expect the U.S. government has ensured the safety of motor vehicles. This includes providing adequate information about the vehicles’ performance and reliability. Without action, NCAP’s ratings will amount to little more than a ‘participation award,’ rather than a motivating force toward excellence.” Claybrook and Advocates released both a report, “NCAP at 40: Time to Return to Excellence,” and a proposal for legislation to revitalize NCAP. Many of these recommendations have already been adopted by Euro NCAP and similar programs around the world.

David Ward, President and CEO of the [Global New Car Assessment Programme](#) said, "The winning formula for improved automotive safety has been the combination of mandatory standards and consumer information. And the first time this was systematically harnessed together was here in the USA. In 1979 the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, led by Joan Claybrook, began to publish crash test results at a higher level of stringency than required by federal standards and the NCAP era began. It has now become a worldwide phenomenon." Ward continued, "As we celebrate its first forty years, I hope that US NCAP can again show the same mold-breaking power that it did in 1979. As other NCAPs become increasingly sophisticated, it will surely be desirable for the tradition of US leadership in automotive safety to be demonstrated once again. The NCAP community around the world was encouraged to see the proposed update of US NCAP in 2015 and we all hope that it will be implemented soon. For it is only by continuous improvement that any NCAP maintains its effectiveness."

Jack Gillis, Executive Director of the [Consumer Federation of America](#), was instrumental in publishing the first edition of “The Car Book,” which revealed NCAP ratings to the public for the first time. “Vehicle safety design and technology is light years ahead of the current crash test program,” Gillis said. “The NCAP program needs to keep up with the rest of the world not only to ensure that Americans have access to the safest cars in the world, but also to keep them globally competitive. Doing so, and publishing differentiated comparative test results, will result in a giant leap forward in the safety of American cars and a significant reduction of the death and injury by products most of us depend on every day.”

NCAP was created with the idea that providing safety rating information to the public creates a powerful incentive to manufacture safer automobiles. The 40th anniversary of this groundbreaking program should be honored with a renewed focus on making vehicles safer for all motorists.

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