NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATION GOVERNMENT 5-STAR SAFETY RATINGS FOR MOTOR VEHICLES ADVERTISING & COMMUNICATION USAGE GUIDELINES

Purpose of these Advertising Guidelines

NHTSA created the 5-Star Safety Ratings program to provide consumers with information about crashworthiness, crash avoidance and other areas that improve the safety of new vehicles.¹ These ratings are required to be displayed on every new vehicle's Monroney label .² In addition, NHTSA encourages vehicle manufacturers, dealers, and advertising agencies to use the 5-star safety ratings in advertisements for their tested vehicles. These guidelines for vehicle manufacturers, dealers, and advertising agencies (hereafter collectively called "advertisers") are intended to promote accurate characterization and comparison of the Government 5-Star Safety Ratings and use of information relating to advanced crash avoidance technologies that meet government performance criteria. The guidelines apply to all uses, such as print, online, mobile, TV and radio advertisements, as well as press releases and other consumer-based marketing communications.

These guidelines provide recommendations for advertising using the NHTSA 5-star safety ratings. It also identifies some practices that could lead to inaccurate or misleading use of the 5- star safety ratings. Failure to conform to these guidelines may result in Buyer Alerts on the SaferCar.gov webpage, or issuance of a press release or other alert to potential consumers correcting the misstatement. Particularly egregious instances of knowing misstatements or mischaracterizations of a vehicle's NCAP ratings may be referred to other Federal or state authorities for appropriate legal action. (*See Violation of Advertising Guidelines section.*)

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. A 5-star rating is the highest rating that can be achieved in any crash category.

Advertisers should 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, advertisers should use a phrase similar to the following: "received the highest Government frontal crash safety rating," or "achieved a 5-star overall frontal crash safety rating."

¹ 49 U.S.C. §32302.

² 15 U.S.C. §1232; 49 C.F.R. §575.301.

NHTSA does not award higher than a 5-star rating. Thus, advertisers should not use 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. An advertisement should not claim that a vehicle earned a rating higher than 5-stars.

NHTSA will provide an overall frontal crash safety rating on www.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 particular 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 a 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. A 5-star rating is the highest rating that can be achieved in any crash category.

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.

For vehicles receiving a 5-star overall side barrier crash safety rating, advertisers should use a phrase similar to the following: "received the highest Government safety rating for the side barrier crash test." For vehicles receiving a 5-star side pole crash safety rating for the front seating positions, advertisers should use a phrase similar to the following: "received the highest Government safety rating for the side pole crash test." If the side barrier crash safety rating is promoted the side pole crash safety rating also should be provided; if the side pole crash safety rating is promoted, the side barrier crash safety rating should be provided.

NHTSA does not award higher than a 5-star rating. Thus, advertisers should not use 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. An advertisement should not claim that a vehicle earned a rating higher than 5-stars.

NHTSA combines results from 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. Advertisers should 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, advertisers should 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, advertisers

should 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 www.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 particular 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 tested vehicles that are 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 as engine/power source choices, and where NHTSA deems that a rating is limited only to a particular configuration, advertisements should have a phrase such as "rating applies only to vehicles with [specify equipment]."

Rollover Safety Rating

Advertisers should 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 www.SaferCar.gov should prominently mention 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 safety rating**. 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, e.g., frontal crash ratings and side crash ratings. The highest Overall Vehicle Score achievable is 5 stars.

Avoid Misleading Terminology

Language referring to "doubling," "tripling" or "quadrupling" of a star rating is misleading because it implies that the vehicle scored a star rating two, three or four times that of another vehicle. Advertisers should not use rating add-ons. For example, language claiming that a vehicle scored a rating of 5.6 stars is inaccurate and misleading to consumers. NHTSA ratings are always whole numbers—no decimal points are used and a vehicle cannot achieve a rating or Overall Vehicle Score higher than 5 stars.

Words such as "perfect," "safest," "flawless" or "best in class" to describe a particular star rating or the Overall Vehicle Score received by the vehicle are misleading. 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 ratings or score.

Proper Seating Terminology

NHTSA encourages advertisers to use terminology for seating positions that is consistent with terminology used by NHTSA. NHTSA considers the use of the term "occupant" to be confusing to consumers, since it is unclear whether the term refers to the driver or a passenger. Accordingly, advertisers 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 **driver** and **rear passenger** seating positions.
- The seating position for the side pole crash test is typically referred to as **driver** seating position.

Competitive Comparisons

Advertisements that competitively compare frontal crash star ratings or Overall Vehicle Scores of two or more vehicles should compare only vehicles that are within 250 pounds of each other and within the same body style. Comparisons for frontal crash ratings or Overall Vehicle Scores should not be made or 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 Overall Vehicle Scores for vehicles within the same body style 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.

In contrast, side barrier, side pole, side overall and rollover resistance ratings can generally be compared to one another regardless of vehicle weights or vehicle body styles without any potential confusion to consumers.

Safety Concerns

Safety concerns identified by NHTSA are to be clearly stated and prominently displayed directly beneath, or after, the applicable star rating in the body of the advertisement for all model years where the safety concern appears on SaferCar.gov. Failure to clearly display these safety concerns is an inaccurate and potentially misleading use of the NHTSA rating.

Mid-Year Changes

Vehicle manufacturers who make a mid-model year running change to a vehicle that has already been rated, to address safety concerns or for 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.

Crash Avoidance Technologies

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

Vehicles that are equipped with recommended technologies, such as forward collision warning, lane departure warning, or rearview video systems recommended by NHTSA may be promoted by advertisers in their advertising. No star ratings or partial star ratings may be attributed to crash avoidance technologies. No additional emphasis may be placed on the star ratings for frontal, side, rollover or combined, due to the presence of crash avoidance technologies. As such, advertisers should use phrases similar to the following, as applicable:

- "(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 a rearview video system recommended by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration."
- "(Insert car make and model) is equipped with (forward collision warning and/or lane departure warning, and/or rearview video) systems 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 program 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 accurately convey the display/image of the star rating(s) used in the advertisement.

Corporate Twins

Each year, vehicle manufacturers provide NHTSA with a list of vehicles they have identified as "corporate twins." If a vehicle manufacturer has notified NHTSA that a vehicle is a "corporate twin" of another vehicle, then the appropriate frontal/ side/ rollover star safety ratings and Overall Vehicle Score may be applied to each corporate twin. When a vehicle's star safety ratings and test results are released and it has any corporate twin(s), 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 results.

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 attributions, should be used.

Government 5-Star Logo

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

Questions pertaining to advertisements or TV spots that incorporate the Government 5-star logo with star safety ratings, Overall Vehicle Scores, and/or crash avoidance technologies that meet NHTSA's performance criteria may be submitted to NHTSA's Office of Communications and Consumer Information at (202) 366-9550 or via email at Crash.Test@dot.gov.

Vector-based images of the Government 5-star logo are available for download by visiting ftp://ftp.nhtsa.dot.gov/AdSlicks/. Click on the Logos folder. Look for the Adobe Illustrator EPS file named NHTSA.eps. The logo is shown below and the preferred logo colors are Blue: Pantone 286 and Red: Pantone 186.



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, querying 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). 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-rolls of crash tests. Request access to this footage from NHTSA's Office of Communications and Consumer Information at (202) 366-9550 or via email at Crash.Test@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 Overall Vehicle 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.

Non-Conformance with Advertising Guidelines

NHTSA will contact the advertiser or manufacturer should it become aware of any advertisement or public statement that misrepresents the NCAP program and may issue a press release or other alert to potential consumers correcting the misstatement. Particularly egregious instances of knowing misstatements or mischaracterizations of a vehicle's NCAP ratings may be referred to other Federal or state authorities for appropriate legal action.

The SaferCar.gov website is intended to provide accurate and easily understandable safety information to consumers.³ If an advertiser makes inaccurate or misleading statements in any media, including print, TV, radio, online, mobile or other media, regarding any of the crash test ratings or results produced by the agency's 5-Star Safety Ratings program or any associations to the Government 5-star ratings program for a vehicle that is either sold in the U.S. or in other countries, NHTSA may take any or all of the following actions:

³ 49 U.S.C. §32302.

Place a "Buyer Alert" warning on the SaferCar.gov website in immediate proximity to the correct ratings of the vehicle. (In the event that a manufacturer publishes an inaccurate crash test rating or a result for a vehicle that has not been tested, under the guidelines, the agency may place a "Buyer Alert" warning on the SaferCar.gov website (1) for the life cycle of a vehicle model until the vehicle is re-rated or (2) for all of the manufacturer's vehicles rated by NHTSA.



- Place an explanation of the violation in a footnote on the SaferCar.gov website in all locations where the ratings information for the vehicle manufacturer is displayed. This may include a statement on the website's homepage alerting consumers to the violation.
- Issue a press release about the violation to inform consumers.
- In the case of an egregious violation, remove the rating(s) and recommendations of effective crash avoidance technologies from its website and notify the manufacturer that it is no longer permitted to use this information in its vehicle promotions.

NHTSA does not award a rating higher than a 5-star rating under the program it has established to provide information in a simple and understandable form to assist consumers in evaluating the safety of new vehicle models.⁴ Accordingly, the Advertising Guidelines for NHTSA's 5-Star Ratings Program do not allow an advertiser to claim that a vehicle received a star rating or an Overall Vehicle Score higher than 5 stars. A manufacturer that makes that claim is intentionally misleading the public. Similarly, an advertiser that claims an enhanced star rating or Overall Vehicle Score by means of such things as higher numbers, plus symbols or other implications of greater value is intentionally misleading the public. Finally, an advertiser that advertises NHTSA ratings , or uses the NHTSA, DOT, SaferCar.gov or 5-Star Safety Ratings logos, for vehicles that have not been tested under the agency's program and for which ratings are not publicly available on www.SaferCar.gov, is also intentionally misleading the public.

Knowing misstatements or mischaracterizations of the ratings, such as the ones outlined above, may be referred to other Federal or state authorities for appropriate legal action.

⁴ 49 U.S.C. §32302(b).