

Thursday 22 October, 2009

Pedestrians at risk of more serious road injuries

Australian car manufacturers need to pay more attention to designing cars which protect pedestrians as well as the occupants, according to researchers from the University of Adelaide.

Engineers from the University's Centre for Automotive Safety Research (CASR) say the highest selling vehicles in Australia lag behind their European and Japanese counterparts when it comes to pedestrian safety.

"While some of our locally produced cars are achieving a 5-star rating for occupant safety, they still have a long way to go when it comes to protecting pedestrians in the event of a collision," says CASR researcher Giulio Ponte.

"Most of our vehicles have a poor capacity to absorb impact from a human body, resulting in significant leg and head injuries even at impact speeds as low as 40km/h," Mr Ponte says.

In the past 20 years, 6149 pedestrians have been killed on Australian roads, representing 16.5 per cent of all road fatalities in this period.

Getting hit by a car at 40 km/h is equivalent to falling from the roof of a double storey house onto the front of a car, researchers say.

"Pedestrians in Europe and Japan are more likely to suffer fewer injuries on impact because the vehicles in these countries are designed with some emphasis on pedestrian protection," Mr Ponte says.

Mr Ponte and CASR colleague Andrew van den Berg will present a free public lecture in Adelaide this Friday, explaining the methods used to test vehicles for pedestrian safety.

They would like to see the Federal Government adopt the Global Technical Regulation (GTR) for Pedestrian Safety.

"There is currently no requirement for Australian car manufacturers to achieve a minimum level of protection for pedestrians when designing new vehicles," Mr van den Berg says. "However, so far this year 158 pedestrians have died on Australian roads because of a collision with a motor vehicle. The adoption of a GTR would be an excellent starting point to reduce the risk of injuries to pedestrians."

According to results from the Australasian New Car Assessment Program, the Subaru Impreza has achieved the maximum 4 stars in Australia for pedestrian safety as well as achieving a five star occupant protection rating. The majority of the other top 20 selling cars with a five star occupant protection rating only have a 1 or 2 star rating for pedestrian protection.

WHAT: CASR Public Lecture: *Pedestrian Impact Testing* by Giulio Ponte and Andrew van den Berg
WHERE: Art Gallery of South Australia Auditorium, North Terrace
WHEN: Friday 23 October, 2009, 4pm-5.30pm
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