



THE INTRODUCTION OF EURO NCAP'S NEW RATING SCHEME

1) Why is Euro NCAP changing its rating system?

Euro NCAP's vision is to ensure that car manufacturers make the safest possible range of vehicles available to the consumer. Euro NCAP knows that consumers are interested in the safety offered to both occupants AND other road users when they are buying a new car. Previously, Euro NCAP made three separate ratings available for each vehicle. From February 2009, Euro NCAP will publish a new overall rating for every vehicle that will cover Adult Occupant Protection, Child Occupant Protection, Pedestrian Protection and a new area of assessment: Safety Assist. This is a rating scheme that assesses more of the vehicle's safety aspects than ever before and produces an overall picture of the car's safety performance on the road. Euro NCAP believes its introduction represents a positive step forward for vehicle safety and consumers.

The introduction of the new rating scheme is the result of Euro NCAP's need to reward new safety developments on the market. Every year, new technologies emerge, which offer manufacturers the possibility to improve the level of safety equipment fitted in their vehicles. Euro NCAP is setting its benchmarks higher to ensure not only that, manufacturers continue to aim high themselves, but also that safety engineers are rewarded for their efforts. The introduction of safety assist will allow Euro NCAP to reward manufacturers for the fitment of new technologies.

Despite great progress, Euro NCAP also believes that some manufacturers have prioritised investment in some areas of safety, whilst compromising others where lives could still be saved. Many technologies or design features have been in existence for some time, but are scarcely seen in vehicles on the road. For example, many manufacturers achieve high scores in Euro NCAP's adult occupant protection rating to attract consumers, yet only one manufacturer has achieved four stars in pedestrian protection in the last ten years! Euro NCAP's new overall rating will address this imbalance. To achieve the maximum score, manufacturers will need to do well in each area of assessment.

2) Is Euro NCAP's current rating system no longer applicable?

Euro NCAP's role is to set benchmarks higher than legislation for manufacturers to aspire to. When Euro NCAP first started, manufacturers claimed that no carmaker would ever achieve five stars in adult occupant protection. Look where we are ten years later! For example in 2007, 97% of vehicles achieved either a four or five star result in adult occupant protection. Euro NCAP needs to move forward with the safety technologies that are coming onto the market and ensure that responsible manufacturers can be set higher challenges to reduce even further the number of fatalities and severe injuries on the road.

3) Is it fair on carmakers to introduce a new and tougher Rating Scheme in an economic downturn?

Euro NCAP is well aware that in times of economic crisis priorities are made. Euro NCAP wants to make sure that safety remains a top priority. In 2007, the economic damages generated by traffic accidents were estimated at €200 billion, corresponding to approximately 2% of the European Union's Gross National Product. By ensuring safety design and equipment are introduced through recognition by the new Rating Scheme, this will in turn lessen the financial burden on society and will continue to help relieve the emotional trauma encountered by millions of families across Europe. Euro NCAP believes not prioritising safety is a false economy and that manufacturers who remain committed to safety will be justly awarded with a good overall rating.

The new rating scheme is more challenging in some areas, but it does offer lead time to manufacturers in others. Euro NCAP needs to establish benchmarks, but consider the current environment and give carmakers the opportunity to implement the best safety features into their vehicles. The requirements under the new Rating Scheme will be gradually tightened by 2012. By that time manufacturers will need to show improved levels of protection in the four levels of assessment, particularly in pedestrian protection, to achieve the top overall award of five stars.

4) Euro NCAP is introducing a new fourth box 'Safety Assist'. Will Euro NCAP be assessing all active safety technologies?

To start with, Euro NCAP will reward three technologies: driver-set speed limiting devices (SLD), electronic stability control (ESC)¹ and seatbelt reminders². Euro NCAP cannot rate the performance of particular ESC systems, so the reward is based on fitment rate only. In the new rating scheme, it will be impossible to achieve a maximum of five stars in the tested vehicle without the standard fitment of ESC in the majority of sales. Clearly in the future, 'Safety Assist' will give us the opportunity to reward manufacturers for other driver assistance technologies and to gradually encourage their fitment as standard on vehicles coming onto the market.

5) In the Euro NCAP scoring system, will there be one overall score out of five combining adult, child and pedestrian protection?

For the new rating system the overall award will be in the form of a simple 1 to 5 star rating, with a maximum score possible of five stars. The total score is taken from individual scores achieved from adult (a maximum of 36 points), child (49 points possible), pedestrian (36 points) and Euro NCAP's new rating 'safety assist' (a maximum of seven points). These scores are weighted to reflect each area of assessment and their statistical relevance in relation to real-life accidents and their societal importance.

6) Will the new rating system be backwards compatible - i.e. what will Euro NCAP do about ratings awarded under the current system?

Euro NCAP cannot make our ratings backward compatible because we will be accessing elements that are not currently part of our current rating system (Whiplash, ESC, SLD's).

¹ ESC is a generic term, manufacturers may have other names for their control systems

² Seatbelt reminders were previously covered in Euro NCAP's Adult Occupant Protection Rating

7) When the first results come out in February will there be any way to distinguish cars that have scored five stars under the old scoring system from cars that score five stars in the new scoring system?

On our website where many consumers look for our information, the results achieved before and after 2009 will be clearly separated and differentiated. Under the new rating scheme, stars will no longer be shown for the four individual boxes (four areas of assessment). Instead, percentages will be used to communicate the performance in these four areas of assessment. A new overall star award will be introduced that will be used by manufacturers from 2009 in their marketing campaigns. Carmakers will also be able to indicate that assessments from 2009 are tougher than those made in 2008 or before.

8) Euro NCAP has now introduced a whiplash test. Are there further developments ahead?

Euro NCAP is currently preparing a route map strategy for the next five years where it will consider other safety areas that Euro NCAP intends to develop. This may result in changes to Euro NCAP's protocols and the way Euro NCAP carries out its tests. Of particular future interest for Euro NCAP is the issue of vehicle compatibility and partner protection.