



**ROAD
SAFETY
COMMISSION**

A Consumer Guide to Safer Vehicles

Suitable for Remote and Regional Western Australia

Introduction

Statistics reveal that drivers are more likely to be killed or seriously injured on roads in remote and regional Western Australia, with the rates of deaths and serious injuries up to four times higher than in metropolitan Perth.

However, this isn't something that we have to accept.

Towards Zero, the Western Australian road safety strategy for 2008 - 2020, aims to improve road safety through four cornerstones: Safe Road Use, Safe Roads and Roadsides, Safe Speeds and Safe Vehicles.

Focusing on all four cornerstones will bring around the biggest benefits to road safety.

All road users can play a part in helping to keep our roads safe. Driving a safe vehicle is one way in which you can make a difference to the overall safety of your family and community.



Are you buying a new or second hand vehicle?

Have you ever thought about the safety of the vehicle you drive?

Just because a car is new, or nearly new, doesn't mean it's safe. Conversely, just because a vehicle is older, doesn't make it unroadworthy.

There is a range of features that can be added to - or bought with - vehicles to increase their safety.

It's a little known fact that if everyone bought the safest vehicle in its class - including used cars - safety across Australia would improve by 25 per cent. Meanwhile, if all new vehicles had similar safety features to the safest vehicle in their class, deaths and serious injuries could be reduced by up to 40 per cent.

Australia has a star rating system for its vehicles - new and old.

It's quite simple - the more stars that a vehicle has been awarded the safer it is.

You can find the ratings for new and used vehicles online:

- New vehicle ratings are based on crash test results from the Australasian New Car Assessment Program (ANCAP). You can find ANCAP results at: ancap.com.au
- Older vehicles are given a safety rating for their actual performance in crashes. The Used Car Safety Ratings can be found at howsafeisyourcar.com.au

The ANCAP and UCSR programs are the first, best source of information on buying safer cars. This guide provides extra information about choosing safer vehicles suited to remote and regional Western Australia.

Safety features for cars

There are two types of safety features to look out for: those that protect the vehicle occupants in a crash and those that help a vehicle to avoid a crash.

Crash protection features you should look for:



Airbags

Airbags enhance the protection provided by seat belts. The best protection in a frontal crash is achieved with a correctly worn seat belt and an airbag. Seek front, side, curtain and knee airbags for maximum safety.



Crumple zones and strong occupant compartments

Modern vehicles protect drivers and passengers by using crumple zones to absorb crash energy. This means the vehicle absorbs the impact of the crash, rather than the occupants taking the force. ANCAP includes impact tests that measure how a car protects the occupants.



Seat belts

Three point lap/sash seat belts offer better protection than two point lap seat belts and should be installed in all seating positions. Check that your vehicle has enough child restraint anchor points for your needs.



Head rests

Head rests are important safety features which help to prevent whip lash in rear end crashes. They should be fitted to both front and back seats.

Some people believe that bull bars make vehicles safer. However, statistics reveal that vehicles equipped with bull bars are more likely to kill or seriously injure pedestrians. Meanwhile, tests have shown that bull bars can affect the way the vehicle crumples in a crash, increasing the risk of injury to the people inside. There are rules concerning what kinds of bull bars are acceptable and you can find out more from the Department of Transport: <http://www.transport.wa.gov.au/>

Crash prevention features you should look for:

Electronic Stability Control (ESC)

ESC helps you to avoid a crash by reducing the danger of skidding or losing control when a driver over-steers.

Auto Emergency Braking (AEB)

AEB can alert the driver to an imminent crash and help them to use the maximum braking capacity of the vehicle. If the driver does not act in time, the vehicle can apply the brakes independently of the driver, to help prevent the crash.

Antilock Braking Systems (ABS)

ABS reduces the risk of skidding under heavy braking and allows the driver to maintain steering control. ABS operates only under heavy braking or on slippery surfaces.

Intelligent Speed Assist (ISA)

ISA is a safety technology system which alerts the driver when they exceed the speed limit, by activating audio and visual warnings.

Visibility (seeing and being seen)

When driving, seeing clearly around the vehicle helps the driver to detect risks and hazards on the road. It's also important for other road users that you can be seen clearly. In most driving conditions a white car is more visible. Driving with headlights on or installing daytime running lights also helps you to be seen more easily.



Guide to safer vehicles for regional areas

If you travel on sealed or well-maintained unsealed roads in a major town or rural region, and you travel fewer than 200 kilometres a day, then it's likely that you will not need a vehicle with any special features. While you can choose any five-star ANCAP rated vehicle, it's best to choose one that can be easily maintained by a local mechanic.

If you carry more than a few people, you will need to look for safer vehicles in that class. There is safety rating information available for sedans, people movers, sports utility vehicles or four-wheel-drives (4WD), buses and utes.

You can find more information about safer vehicles at the ANCAP and UCSR websites.



Guide to safer vehicles for remote areas

In remote areas, where most of your travel may be on unsealed and unformed roads or tracks, vehicles will need to be able to handle harsh conditions. Corrugations, dust, extreme heat and water crossings require more robust vehicles.

Of course it's important that your vehicles can be well maintained. This means choosing one for which spare parts are easy to find and which your nearest mechanic can service.

Only 4WD vehicles are suitable for off-road driving on unformed roads and corrugated tracks. When choosing a 4WD, check the ANCAP or UCSR websites for safety ratings.

Travelling in large groups in remote areas

4WD buses may meet the needs of remote communities transporting large numbers of people. However, ANCAP does not test these vehicles, so their safety can't be assessed. If buying a 4WD bus choose one with all seats facing forward, and with as many safety features as you can afford.

Be aware that you can't use child car restraints in a troop carrier with sideways facing seats and will receive significant fines if you are caught doing so. Even regular seatbelts aren't designed to work on sideways facing seats. If you are buying a troop carrier, it's safer to choose one with forwards facing seats.

Where to find information on new or second hand?

Vehicles aged between 1 and 5 years

Under the safety ratings, vehicles less than 5 years can be considered as new. A check of the ANCAP rating will show how the vehicle performed in crash tests. There may also be information in the UCSR to show the crash performance in real world crashes.

Vehicles aged between 5 and 10 years

If you travel in an urban and regional area and drive fewer than 15,000 km per year then vehicles between 5 and 10 years are a viable choice. In general, they are not suitable for use in remote areas where conditions are harsher. Information will generally be available on UCSR website.

Vehicles older than 10 years

Vehicles in this age range are more liable to fail and need higher levels of maintenance. Only consider an older vehicle if you drive fewer than 10,000 kilometres per year and only in areas where a break down will not leave you stranded in a remote area. Information will generally be available on the UCSR website.



Maintenance

When you live in regional or remote areas getting some vehicles maintained may be difficult and parts harder to find. You may want to think about which dealerships are near you and choose the safest vehicle for your needs from within the range of vehicles they offer.

