



Ralph Seekins

MODERN VEHICLE SAFETY FEATURES

today. It helps reduce the risk of injury in frontal, rear, angular and rollover accidents.

Dual driver and passenger front airbags are now universally available. The system is designed to measure things like the occupant's weight on the front seat and then determine what airbag inflation to use or whether the airbag should even be deployed at all. Remember, in order for airbags to be most effective, the occupant must be properly seated and wearing their safety belts.

Safety canopy systems with rollover sensors for first, second or third seat passengers (depending on vehicle) deploy in certain side-impact and rollover situations. They deploy from the headliner down across the side glass and stay inflated for a longer period of time to help protect from multiple impacts or rollovers.

Another feature is "Safety Cell" construction – a structure of high strength welded steel stampings and beams that surround the interior. It is designed to help minimize the effect of an impact on passengers.

There are a whole boatload more safety features built into today's vehicles. They include, front and rear crumple zones built into the infrastructure to absorb impacts, fuel pump inertia shutoff switches that automatically shut off the fuel being pumped to the engine in case of a collision, inflatable rear seat belts and driver knee airbags in some of the most current models, pull-to-close power window switches to help prevent accidental roll-up by pets or small children, anchors and latches for child seats, and more.

All this to say that modern cars and trucks are safer than ever before for you and your family.

control technologies monitor wheel speeds, the anti-lock brake system, acceleration, steering input and the vehicle's rotation around the vertical axis of the vehicle and the tip or lean of the vehicle. It then helps stabilize the vehicle to enhance control in conditions like ice, snow, gravel or rain by selectively applying individual brakes and/or modifying engine power in mere milliseconds.

Electronic brake force distribution systems sense braking requirements on the individual wheels and then control brake distribution between the front and rear wheels – an important feature in trucks or sport utility vehicles that may carry different weight loads.

Trailer sway controls are available that detect when a trailer is swaying and eliminate it by reducing engine power and/or applying brake pressure to the appropriate wheels to help the driver regain control of the trailer.

Tire pressure monitoring systems measure tire pressure in each road wheel (not the spare) and use a radio frequency transmitter to the vehicle's onboard computer that flashes a warning when a tire is significantly underinflated.

Front and rear 3-point outboard safety belt systems are now standard. This is the single most effective occupant protection device available

Having been around the block a few times in my career, I've witnessed an absolutely amazing evolution in the automobile – not just in style and comfort but in occupant safety as well. Let's just name a few improvements that really stand out. And, remember – I've been employed in Ford dealerships for more than 40 years so I know most about Ford's safety features.

Laminated safety glass was first introduced by Ford in 1927. Energy absorbing steering wheels, safety door latches, safety belts and a padded dash board first appeared in 1965 – long before safety became a popular issue. Three point safety belts with automatic locking retractors – the most important occupant protection device – were first offered by Ford in 1970. Anti-lock brakes showed up for the first time by any U.S. automaker in Ford vehicles in 1965. Modern air bags came into volume production by Ford around 1985. And Ford offered second generation airbags in 1998.

Today, there are a number of accident avoidance systems in our modern cars and trucks. For example, electronic stability control systems help improve vehicle stability in extreme or slippery conditions. Roll stability

Ralph Seekins has more than 41 years' experience in the automotive industry. He started as a mechanic, worked in sales, and for the past 34 years, has been the owner of Seekins Ford Lincoln.