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Consumer Safety Purchasing Power

Louis V. Lombardo

The Power To Make Wise Choices

Today consumers have 3 new sources of information to help them make wise choices in new and used vehicles.

- The Car Book 2015, See http://www.autosafety.org/books-reports
- IIHS HLDI Ratings, See http://www.iihs.org/iihs/sr/statusreport/article/50/1/1
- Consumer Reports, See http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/index.htm

Each publication is good. But each has different strengths for making the best possible safety choices. For clarity and comprehensiveness, see The Car Book. For crash test data and safety performance statistics, see IIHS. For reliability and road test handling results, see Consumer Reports.

The latest publication is the April 2015 Auto issue of Consumer Reports.

As a reader and subscriber to Consumer Reports since the 1950s, I have always found their information helpful. I have often wondered why so many people make major purchase decisions in ignorance of important factors that have significance to their future wellbeing.

Ignorance can be conscious or unconscious. Unconscious ignorance is when people are unaware of the availability of valuable information. Then there is conscious ignorance when consumers know of sources of valuable information but ignore the content. We must overcome both types of ignorance by the education of consumers. People can learn by reading, doing, or losing. The bumper sticker message: "If you think education is expensive, try ignorance" is on point in auto safety. Be smart! Before it is too late.

The information available in these three publications can save consumers and their family time, money, aggravation, and perhaps their lives. We all

have a responsibility to help people make wise safety choices as consumers, taxpayers, voters, and investors. These publications help us all.

Consumer Reports 2015 Annual Auto Issue

This publication, as I learned many years ago, was superior to other magazines because they did independent engineering testing and accepted no money from advertisers.

Helpful information for consumers is in the following sections.

Reliability This section is based on 1.1 million vehicles that subscribers reported on in CU's "most recent Annual Auto Survey – the largest automotive consumer data survey in America." Scores are provided for 16 "Trouble Spots" such as "Engine", "Transmission", "Fuel", "Brakes", and "Electrical". This section is useful as an indicator of vehicle design and manufacturing quality of models and manufacturer performance over a period of real world use.

Brand Report Cards This year CR rated the Best and Worst Car Brands based on road tests and predicted reliability. The Best top 5 are Lexus, Mazda, Toyota, Audi, and Subaru. The Worst bottom 5 were Fiat, Jeep, Mini, Dodge, and Ford.

Safety As I wrote in 2012 "Consumer Reports recently noted that safety remains the number one factor for consumers when choosing a new car." See http://www.careforcrashvictims.com/assets/lombardo-CTTI-Sept2012.pdf

The CR 2015 Annual Auto Issue uses IIHS and NHTSA data in making its "Top Picks". And it devotes pages 22-27 to "Cars That Can Save Your Life" and "Recalls". Nice but not commensurate with the need and CU's capabilities.

On an average day, nearly 100 Americans die of crash injuries, another 400 suffer serious injuries that include traumatic brain injuries, paraplegia, quadriplegia, burns, and amputations. NHTSA estimates the value of crashes each day to amount to more than \$2 Billion. See

http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/812013.pdf

So Consumer Reports readers are right to rate safety as their number one priority. CU can and must do better on auto safety for its readers and all of us.