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VNR: Thurs. 6/18/2015, 10:30-11 a.m. EDT; repeat 1:30-2 p.m. EDT (KU) GALAXY 25

SD transponder 13/slot 4 (dl11967.5V) bandwidth 6 MHz; symbol rate 3.9787 FEC  $\frac{3}{4}$

HD transponder 13/slot AB (dl11955.5V) bandwidth 18 MHz; symbol rate 13.235 FEC  $\frac{3}{4}$

## **IIHS launches ease-of-use ratings of LATCH hardware in vehicles**

ARLINGTON, Va. — Only 3 vehicles of more than 100 evaluated by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety have child restraint installation hardware that earns a good rating for ease of use, while more than half have hardware that is poor or marginal.

The Institute's new LATCH ratings will serve as a resource for families looking for a vehicle that makes it easy to transport their children safely. They also are intended to encourage vehicle manufacturers to pay attention to this equipment and make improvements.

Properly installed, age-appropriate child restraints provide considerably more protection for children in crashes than safety belts alone. However, observational studies have found that parents and caregivers often fail to secure them tightly or make other installation mistakes.

LATCH, which stands for Lower Anchors and Tethers for Children, is intended to make it easier to install a child seat properly. It works: Child restraints installed with LATCH, rather than with vehicle safety belts, are more likely to be installed correctly, research has shown.

But in many vehicles, LATCH hardware could be better. Parents are more likely to install the seat correctly when the LATCH hardware meets certain key ease-of-use criteria.

"LATCH is meant to simplify child seat installations, but it doesn't always succeed," says Jessica Jermakian, an IIHS senior research scientist. "Parents often struggle to locate the anchors in the vehicle or find it's difficult to attach the seats to them. We believe fixing these problems will make the task less frustrating for parents and increase the likelihood that children will ride in properly installed seats."

### **Good LATCH defined**

LATCH has been required in vehicles and on child restraints since 2002. In a vehicle, the lower anchors are located where the seatback meets the bottom seat cushion, an area known as the seat bight. Attachments at the bottom of the child restraint connect to these. The top tether connects the top of the child seat to an anchor located on the vehicle's rear shelf, seatback, floor, cargo area or ceiling.

Child restraints can be installed with lower anchors or safety belts. A top tether should be used with every forward-facing child restraint, whether it is secured using the safety belt or using the lower anchors.

In the new ratings system, vehicle LATCH hardware is rated good if it meets the following criteria:

- The lower anchors are no more than 3/4 inch deep in the seat bight.
- The lower anchors are easy to maneuver around. This is defined as having a clearance angle greater than 54 degrees.
- The force required to attach a standardized tool to the lower anchors is less than 40 pounds. (The tool represents a lower connector of a child seat, though the actual force required when installing a seat varies depending on the specific connector.)
- Tether anchors are on the vehicle's rear deck or on the top 85 percent of the seatback. They shouldn't be at the very bottom of the seatback, under the seat, on the ceiling or on the floor.
- The area where the tether anchor is found doesn't have any other hardware that could be confused for the tether anchor. If other hardware is present, then the tether anchor must have a clear label located within 3 inches of it.

Under federal regulations, most vehicles must have at least two rear seating positions with full LATCH hardware and a third with at least a tether anchor. The IIHS ratings are based on the best two LATCH positions available in the vehicle's second row.

To earn a good rating, two LATCH positions must meet all five criteria, and a third tether anchor also must be easy to use. For an acceptable rating, two LATCH positions must each meet at least 2 of the 3 requirements for lower anchors and at least 1 of the 2 tether anchor requirements. If either position meets neither of the tether anchor requirements or meets only one of the lower anchor requirements, then the vehicle is marginal. If even fewer criteria are met, the vehicle is poor.

The ratings measure ease of use only. A correct installation in a vehicle with poor LATCH is just as safe as a correct installation in a vehicle with good LATCH. The same is true for an installation with a vehicle safety belt: If it's done correctly — including attaching the tether in the case of a forward-facing restraint — the child will be just as safe as with an installation using lower anchors.

### **How vehicles rate**

Of 102 current models that IIHS has rated for LATCH, the three good ones are the BMW 5 series, a large luxury car; the Mercedes-Benz GL-Class, a large SUV; and the Volkswagen Passat, a midsize car. Of the rest, 44 are acceptable, 45 are marginal, and 10 are poor.

The poor-rated vehicles run the gamut of vehicle types from minicars to large pickups. Most glaring is the Toyota Sienna. As a minivan, it's commonly bought to ferry children.

The online ratings information (see [iihs.org/ratings](http://iihs.org/ratings)) helps consumers understand exactly why a vehicle gets the rating it does. A diagram for each vehicle shows the location of all LATCH-equipped seating positions and which criteria those positions meet and which they miss. The location of extra tether anchors, for use with restraints attached with vehicle safety belts, is also shown.

In some cases, center seating positions don't have their own lower anchors, but manufacturers allow anchors to be "borrowed" from adjacent positions. The rating diagrams show when such borrowing is allowed by the vehicle manufacturer. (Some child restraint manufacturers advise against using borrowed anchors; consumers should check the restraint manual.)

"Even if you're not in the market for a new vehicle, our ratings can be a helpful source of information about a vehicle you already own," Jermakian says. "We're essentially providing you with a map of where child seats can be installed most easily in your vehicle, including the specific hardware available for each seating position."

Seating configurations and LATCH hardware can vary depending on the trim level or type of seats. The rating details indicate which specific vehicle was measured.

### **Good+ to reward greater flexibility**

The Institute plans to award extra credit to vehicles with good-rated LATCH that also provide parents with additional LATCH options beyond the two required seating positions. In particular, the "good+" rating would encourage the availability of LATCH in the second-row center position, the safest place for children to travel. Currently, no vehicles qualify for good+.

A two-row vehicle that meets the criteria for a good rating and also has acceptable or good LATCH in the center will be rated good+. The center LATCH position may use either dedicated anchors or borrowed anchors.

A three-row vehicle must have one additional full LATCH position and tether anchors in all rear seating positions to earn good+. If the vehicle has a second-row center seating position, it must have the ability to use LATCH there as well.

**See next page for full list of LATCH ratings.**

### **For more information, go to [iihs.org](http://iihs.org)**

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety is an independent, nonprofit scientific and educational organization dedicated to reducing the losses — deaths, injuries and property damage — from crashes on the nation's roads. The Institute is wholly supported by auto insurers.

<b>Vehicles rated good, acceptable, marginal and poor for LATCH</b>			
<i>All models are 2015 unless otherwise noted</i>			
<b>Good</b>			
BMW 5 series	Mercedes-Benz GL-Class	Volkswagen Passat	
<b>Acceptable</b>			
Acura MDX	Dodge Durango	Honda Odyssey	Mazda 3
Buick Enclave	Dodge Grand Caravan	Honda Pilot	Mazda CX-5
Chevrolet Cruze	Ford Edge	Hyundai Santa Fe	Mercedes-Benz C-Class
Chevrolet Equinox	Ford Expedition	Jeep Cherokee	Mercedes-Benz E-Class
Chevrolet Impala	Ford Explorer	Jeep Compass	Mitsubishi Outlander Sport
Chevrolet Malibu	Ford Flex	Kia Forte	2014 Nissan Maxima
Chevrolet Tahoe	Ford Focus	Kia Optima	Nissan Murano
Chevrolet Traverse	Ford Taurus	Kia Sedona	Nissan Pathfinder
Chrysler 300	GMC Terrain	Kia Sorento	Nissan Versa
Chrysler Town & Country	GMC Yukon XL	Kia Soul	Toyota Camry
Dodge Dart	Honda Civic	Lexus GX	Volvo S60
<b>Marginal</b>			
2016 Acura RDX	Ford Escape	Lexus CT 200h	Subaru Impreza
Audi Q7	Ford F-150	Lexus NX	Subaru Outback
BMW 3 series	Ford Fusion	Lexus RC	Subaru XV Crosstrek
2016 BMW X3	GMC Acadia	Lexus RX	Toyota 4Runner
BMW X5	Honda Accord	Mazda CX-9	Toyota Avalon
Buick LaCrosse	Honda CR-V	Mini Cooper	Toyota Corolla
Cadillac SRX	Hyundai Elantra	Nissan Frontier	Toyota Highlander
Chevrolet Sonic	Hyundai Sonata	Nissan Quest	Toyota Prius
Chrysler 200	Infiniti QX60	Nissan Rogue	Toyota RAV4
Dodge Charger	Jeep Grand Cherokee	Nissan Sentra	Volvo V60
Dodge Journey	Jeep Wrangler	Subaru Forester	Volvo XC60
Dodge Ram 1500			
<b>Poor</b>			
Chevrolet Silverado 1500	Hyundai Accent	Nissan Altima	Toyota Tundra
Ford Fiesta	Lexus ES	Toyota Sienna	Volkswagen Jetta
GMC Sierra 1500	Mazda 6		