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Fender - Benders Cost Luxury Car Owners

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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WASHINGTON (AP) -- Buying an expensive car can bring an owner style, prestige and repair bills in the thousands of dollars to fix damage caused by minor fender-benders.

Repairing damages to luxury vehicles involved in low-speed crashes of 3 to 6 miles per hour, which typically happen in commuter traffic or in parking lots, can cost significantly more than for other cars, according to tests released Thursday by the [Insurance Institute for Highway Safety](#).

Many of the bumpers are flimsy and fail to absorb the energy in a crash, leading to damage to the grille, hood and head lights, the institute found.

"There shouldn't be much or any damage in collisions at these speeds, especially to expensive and presumably well-made cars," said Joe Nolan, a senior vice president at the Institute.

The institute conducted a series of four low-speed crashes on 11 2007 luxury vehicles. It found the Infiniti G35, which starts at \$31,450, had the highest repair bill at nearly \$14,000 in combined damages for the four tests. In one test involving the front-end, the G35's bill was more than \$5,000.

The Acura TL and Mercedes C Class racked up more than \$11,000 in repairs for the four tests while the tab for the Lexus ES nearly topped \$11,000. Damage to the Lexus IS cost more than \$9,500.

Only three vehicles sustained less than \$6,000 in damage: the Saab 9-3, Audi A4 and Lincoln MKZ. Other damage estimates included \$8,224 for the Volvo S60, \$7,554 for the Acura TSX and \$6,681 for the BMW 3 Series.

Automakers said the tests did not assess the vehicle's safety and only focused on repair cost. They said it was hard for the tests to replicate the low-speed crashes that typically occur on the road.

[Nissan Motor Co.](#) spokeswoman Jeannine Ginivan said it was "highly unlikely that anyone would be simultaneously involved in the four low-speed crash modes under real-world conditions." Infiniti is Nissan's luxury brand.

Mercedes-Benz spokesman Rob Moran said the results did not reflect the automaker's "holistic approach to occupant safety. This philosophy influences vehicle design and development even down to the front bumper."

Acura, the luxury brand of [Honda Motor Co.](#), said in a statement the TL and TSX sedans were "designed to perform well in real-world situations, and are not limited to specific laboratory tests of bumper

performance."

Bumpers are designed to absorb the energy of a low-speed collision and prevent damage to the front-end. But the tests found that many of the vehicles would slide under the bumpers of the vehicles they strike, causing extensive damage.

In other cases, the institute found the bumpers were flimsy or weren't large enough or extend out to the vehicle's corners to protect it from damage.

Serious injuries are uncommon in low-speed crashes, and the institute's bumper tests did not assess passenger safety.

On the Net:

Insurance Institute for Highway Safety: <http://www.iihs.org>

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