

At a Glance

WHAT'S NEW FROM 2026



In collaboration with



ANCAP
SAFETY



The Stages of Safety

We've been testing and rating cars against four pillars of assessment since 2018. The four-pillar approach continues from 2026, with revised categories designed to better reflect the Stages of Safety.

Vehicle safety continues to evolve, and so does our testing.

We crash cars so you don't have to. Every star rating we award helps you choose a car that protects what matters most – you, your passengers, and everyone else who shares the road. From 2026, we're stepping things up for a safer future. Our vehicle safety experts reshaped our test and rating approach – giving you clarity and driving manufacturers to deliver safer cars with

greater real-world benefits. Our goal remains focused: helping you stay safe, every drive. So, here's a snapshot of what's new for 2026.



Safe Driving

Considers the vehicle technologies and features that assist in providing a safer driving experience for the driver and vehicle occupants.



Crash Avoidance

Assesses the crash avoidance technologies that help prevent or mitigate critical incidents through warnings or autonomous intervention.



Crash Protection

Evaluates the performance of traditional crash protection systems, including vehicle structure, seatbelts, airbags and head restraints to mitigate injuries to vehicle occupants, pedestrians and cyclists.



Post-Crash

Addresses the 'golden hour' of emergency response through post-crash rescue information and assistance systems.

Nobody wants to have a crash, so we're working to encourage safety features that reduce the chance of a crash occurring. And if a crash does happen, how the car can better protect you.

Crash protection fundamentals

Euro NCAP will continue its tradition of assessing Crash Protection of a vehicle such as compartment strength, crumple zones, airbags and seatbelts. What we are doing is adding different dummies and a broader range of assessment speeds and configurations - to ensure our star ratings cater for a greater variety of crashes and more realistic crash outcomes.



FULL-WIDTH FRONTAL TEST

A new deformable crash barrier (the part that simulates an opposing vehicle) replaces the rigid wall. This will tell us more about the timing of airbag deployments in real-world crashes and reduce the possibility of airbag deployment being optimised for just one crash severity.

The driver dummy and the dummy seated in the rear passenger seat both remain small adults, but we have added a third dummy – the THOR average adult – to the front passenger seat.

FRONTAL OFFSET TEST

Our 'two adults & two children' family remains in this test, but instead of the Hybrid III average male dummy that used to sit in the front passenger seat, we've replaced it with a small female dummy (5th percentile).



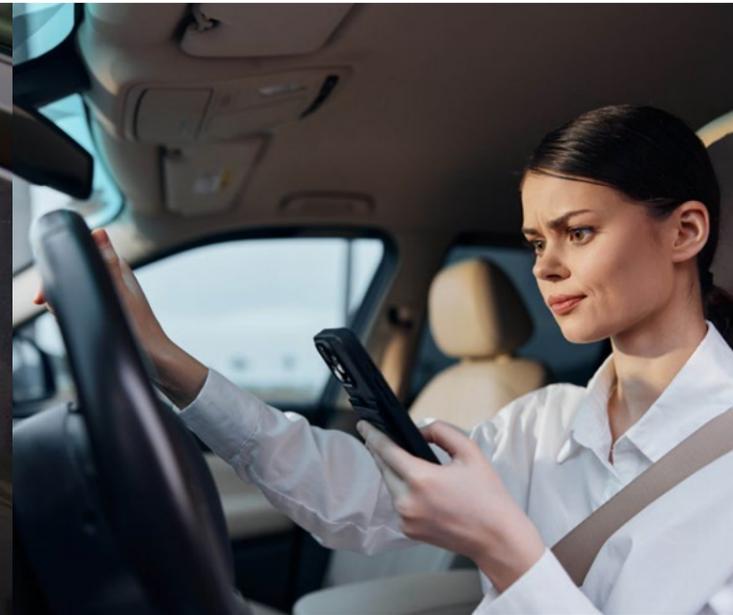
WHIPLASH TEST

The level of whiplash protection provided by a vehicle's seat and headrest will be improved for smaller occupants, with an additional test added to our rear impact assessment.

ROLLOVER PROTECTION

From 2026, manufacturers need to demonstrate that curtain airbags remain inflated for enough time, and cover the appropriate areas of the cabin, to provide adequate protection in a rollover.

All other existing crash tests continue, and their results are further enhanced in frontal impact testing with sled tests and virtual simulations to improve performance robustness and diversity. Points will also be scored for airbags and seatbelts that can adapt to occupants of different sizes and seating positions.



Physical Buttons

If you've noticed that some new cars have the most basic driver controls buried within touchscreens and sub-menus, you're not alone. It's time to 'bring back buttons' and (distraction!). From 2026, Euro NCAP is asking carmakers either to offer physical buttons for important driver controls like the horn, indicators, hazard lights, windscreen wipers and headlights, or dedicate a fixed portion of the cabin display screen to these primary driving functions.

Electric Door Handles

Closely related to the need for tactile driver controls, we're asking that cars with electric door handles – those powered by the cars' 12-volt auxiliary battery – provide the ability for all side door handles to be in the extended/ready-to-open position immediately post-crash.

They'll also need to remain operable from the inside, or provide a manual override, so that occupants can exit, and first-responders can gain access inside the vehicle after a crash.

Driver Engagement

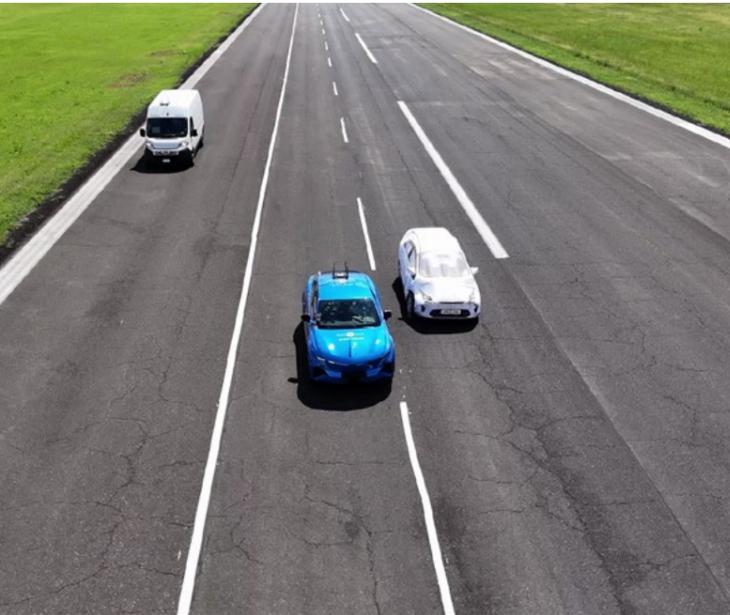
This part of the assessment rewards well-designed systems. When implemented properly, driver monitoring should support the driver - not irritate them. The car shouldn't add to distraction. If the car knows you are paying attention to driving - it should leave you alone.

On the other hand, if the car can tell you are distracted, tired or impaired, its crash avoidance features should step in to assist. This is our aim with linking the driver state with forward collision warning (FCW), driver monitoring systems (DMS), autonomous emergency braking (AEB), and lane support systems (LSS). We're encouraging 'smart coupling,' so the sensitivity (occurrence and severity) of the systems is enhanced – or reduced – depending on how engaged the driver is. We call this the 'Driver State Link.'

ADAS Robustness

We have physically tested the actual performance and effectiveness of crash avoidance systems or ADAS – since 2018. From 2026, we want to know a little more. Will the AEB system fitted to your car allow it to stop for someone wearing different clothes or a high-vis vest? What about at night? When it's raining? These aspects will be examined as we add 'robustness layers' to our ADAS assessments.

Because crash avoidance features should work in real-world conditions, not just lab conditions.



Better Lane Support

If you've driven a car with lane-keeping technology and didn't realise, you are on the right track!

Lane support systems shouldn't be intrusive or obvious. They should work cooperatively with the driver - intervening to help avoid a potential accident. Some cars, unfortunately, haven't yet perfected this. So, we're publishing requirements to help manufacturers introduce systems that balance good protection with a good driving experience. Insights from our research into lane support systems have been written in to our test and rating criteria from 2026. Cars will be assessed against metrics that show:

- How quickly the car's steering reacts when lane support kicks in.
- How much steering input the driver needs to override an unwanted vehicle response.
- The time taken for the driver to re-gain full steering control over the vehicle's intervention.
- How much, and how aggressive or gently, the car shifts left or right when the system is activated.

On-road Driving

We're also taking each car we rate out on public roads to conduct on-road driving assessments, capturing real-world feedback to further enhance our approach. Speed sign recognition accuracy forms part of the on-road driving assessment, and all the data we capture out on our urban and regional drives will be provided to the manufacturer so they can improve their systems.

Managing Fire Risk

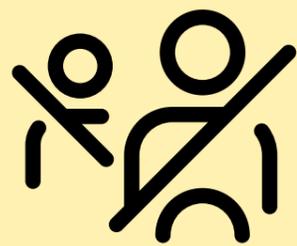
In recent years, an increasing number of hybrid and electric vehicles have entered the European market. From 2026 our star ratings will look at energy management in, and after, a crash.

As part of our star rating assessment, we will examine whether:

- A disturbed high-voltage battery can avoid becoming a fire within set periods of time (20 minutes, 40 minutes and 90minutes).
- Fire risk can be communicated to the driver after a crash.
- A warning notification can be shared with the driver if a battery fire commences during charging (dashboard display or via phone app).

Scoring

The new Stages of Safety approach allows us to enhance existing tests and incorporate new areas of focus as technology evolves and safety priorities change. The way each element is scored has been adjusted, with each of the four stages having a maximum of 100 points. Minimum percentage thresholds continue to apply for each stage and be used to determine the overall star rating.



Safe Driving

Occupant Monitoring

- + Seatbelt usage
- + Occupant classification
- + Occupant presence

Driver Engagement

- + Driver monitoring
- + Driver controls

Vehicle Assistance

- + Speed assistance
- + Adaptive cruise control
- + Steering assistance



Crash Avoidance

Frontal Collisions

- + Car & motorcycle
- + Pedestrian & cyclist

Lane Departure Collisions

- + Lane departure
- + Car & motorcycle

Low Speed Collisions

- + Car & motorcycle
- + Pedestrian & cyclist



Crash Protection

Frontal Impact

- + Frontal offset
- + Full-width
- + Virtual testing & sled

Side Impact

- + Side-impact
- + Oblique pole
- + Farside

Rear Impact

Vulnerable Road User Impact

- + Head impact
- + Pelvis & leg impact



Post-Crash

Rescue Information

- + Rescue sheets
- + Rescue guide

Post-Crash Intervention

- + Advanced eCall
- + Multi-collision brake

Vehicle Extrication

- + Energy management
- + Occupant extraction



About Euro NCAP

Euro NCAP provides consumers with an Independent assessment of the safety level of the most popular cars sold in Europe.

Euro NCAP is a catalyst for encouraging significant safety improvements to new car design. We hope that when buying a new car, Euro NCAP will help you choose for safety.



Euro NCAP

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