

US DoT makes rear-view cameras compulsory

by Tom Phillips 03 Jun 2014



Reversing camera rule is welcome, but shouldn't good design ensure visibility is good to begin with?

Crossovers and SUVs are particularly targeted

The US Department of Transportation (DoT) has issued a new safety standard for rear visibility that requires mandatory fitment of rear-view cameras. The ruling applies to all new vehicles, excluding motorcycles, weighing under 10,000 pounds (4,536kg) sold from 2018.

The ruling has been introduced to cut backover crashes, caused when the victim strays into the blind zone 10-40 feet (3-12m) behind the vehicle that the driver can't see using their mirrors alone.

The DoT estimates that more than 200 deaths and 15,000 injuries are caused in this way every year, with over half of victims being aged under 5 or over 70.

While the new legislation goes some way to prevent such unfortunate incidents, the ruling does raise the question as to whether the design of some cars adds to the problem.

The trend towards crossovers is a case in point, particularly with reference to their popularity with young families and the likely victims of a backover crash. With steeply rising beltlines, thick C-pillars and sloping rooflines becoming hallmarks of this increasingly popular genre of cars, so too are shrinking glasshouses that severely restrict visibility, particularly out back.

The most obvious example of this trend is the Range Rover Evoque, which has a rear screen that's tiny and particularly difficult to see out of.

Perhaps instead of using augmented reality to enhance an SUV's little-used off-road capability, as with the Discovery Vision concept, a far more relevant use of the tech – to improve visibility when reversing – could help cut those DoT statistics and maintain the design team's freedom.

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