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Thursday, December 11, 2003



Ford Explorer

## Ford offers anti-rollover device for SUVs in 2005

Explorer, Expedition, Mountaineer models are targeted

By Jeff Plungis / Detroit News Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Ford Motor Co. said Wednesday it would offer anti-rollover technology in its most popular sport utilities, the latest in a series of moves by automakers to improve SUV safety.

Beginning with the 2005 model year, Ford will offer the anti-rollover intelligent braking system on the Ford Explorer and Expedition, and Mercury Mountaineer SUVs.

The technology is currently available on the 2004 Lincoln Navigator and Aviator SUVs. It debuted on the 2003 Volvo XC-90 SUV.

"Our goal when we developed this technology was to make sure the system keeps control in the hands of the

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driver," said Todd Brown, manager of Ford's North American brake control systems.

The move comes amid growing concern over rollover crashes and only a week after automakers announced an unprecedented deal to deploy more safety technologies to make SUV-car crashes less deadly.

Rollovers are especially deadly even though they represent a small fraction of all vehicle crashes — about 3 percent. But there are more than 10,000 rollover-related deaths each year, representing about one-third of all passenger vehicle deaths.

Ford's anti-roll system, developed in coordination with automotive supplier Continental-Teves Inc., employs gyroscopes that determine whether a vehicle is in danger of tipping over. When this happens, an on-board computer adjusts engine power and applies brakes to one or more wheels to bring the vehicle back under control.

Ford's stability system will not be standard equipment on all five SUV models.

The Volvo XC-90 fared well in an evaluation by Consumer Reports magazine in September 2003. Consumer Reports found the Volvo's stability system superior to some others offered on comparable luxury SUVs.

David Champion, director of auto testing for the magazine, said the Volvo did well at keeping all four wheels on the ground during the magazine's aggressive handling test.

"It comes on quickly and firmly," Champion said. "It works extremely well at shutting the vehicle down."

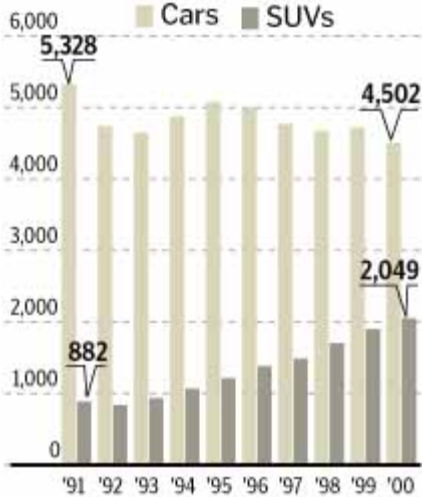
Champion said Ford's decision to offer the technology on its biggest-selling SUVs would be soon matched by other manufacturers. Automakers are looking for an edge to perform well in a new rollover rating test being implemented by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

NHTSA's rollover test, involving a "fishhook" turn using computer

**Tracking fatalities**

Vehicle rollover deaths have climbed because of the popularity of SUVs, which are more prone to roll over.

Rollover-related fatalities, by vehicle type:



Note: Does not include vans and pickups  
Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

The Detroit News



**Lincoln Aviator**

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controls, will be a part of its expanded star-rating system beginning next year. The test was designed, in part, to give better scores to vehicles that employ electronic stability control systems.

"This is a very positive development," Champion said. "We just wish it had happened sooner."

Ford spokeswoman Kristen Kinley said no decision had been made on which versions of the SUVs would include the system as standard or optional equipment. In the 2004 model year, for example, the system was available as standard equipment for the "ultimate" edition of the Navigator 4X2. It was optional on the "luxury" 4X2 and 4X4 models.

Kinley said Ford is considering the anti-rollover technology for additional vehicles, including the Econoline 15-passenger van, but declined to provide details.

[General Motors Corp.](#) offers electronic anti-rollover devices on approximately two million vehicles. It offers different systems on performance cars, family sedans and SUVs. For example, it offers an Active Handling system for the Chevrolet Corvette. The StabiliTrak system can be found on models like the Chevy Tahoe, Suburban and Avalanche.

GM is offering StabiliTrak for the first time on its full-sized Chevy Express and GMC Savana 15-passenger vans this year.

[DaimlerChrysler AG](#) offers a traction control on its Dodge Durango SUV. None of its Jeep SUVs offers the technology, said Chrysler division spokeswoman Angela Spencer Ford.

"We are working on a number of different rollover systems, including advanced air bags, rollover sensors and other technologies," Ford said.

"They will be available on future models."

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## Maintaining stability

How Ford's electronic anti-rollover device works:



- 1 Gyroscopic sensor detects excessive body tilt — a condition conducive to rollover.
- 2 Rollover Stability Control (RSC) system is activated, reducing engine power and/or triggering brakes on the side of the vehicle where counterforce is needed.
- 3 Body tilt is mitigated, enabling driver to regain control.

Sources: Ford and Continental Teves

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