



## **WOMEN AT RISK FROM POOR GRASP OF AUTO SAFETY FACTS**

Despite the fact that women regularly put safety and security at the top of their list of desirable features in a car, the reality is that their understanding of the overall automotive safety scene is either inadequate or misguided.

That's the unsettling view of Susan Winlaw and Alex Law, the authors who studied the automotive needs and concerns of women for their new book -- *Car Advice For Women (and Smart Men)*.

"We found that women don't often have a solid grasp of what car safety actually involves," says Winlaw, "and that means they're making decisions that are putting them and people close to them in danger."

Winlaw says that "Too many women think car safety is all about crash ratings, when it's actually a much broader topic involving things that are rarely reported and not well understood."

Even those five-star crash ratings from NHTSA that women use as the easy guide to vehicle safety aren't much use, Winlaw says. "They are usually misleading as to a car's actual crash-worthiness in comparison to other cars, they only count if you have a certain type of crash, and they only measure the crash's affects on the larger male frame. Smaller women in a similar crash would likely suffer worse injuries or have a greater chance of death because they'd be closer to the steering wheel and the front of the car itself."

When the time comes to buy a new car, Winlaw says, "the most important safety point to remember is that cars' safety levels go up with their size and weight. A compact car may have a five-star crash rating, but that rating only reflects the likelihood of your being injured if you crash into another compact car. If you crash into something bigger, the danger to you is bigger. Smaller cars are indeed safer than they used to be, but so are bigger cars. The bottom line is that, the smaller the car you're in, the greater the likelihood you're going to be hurt or killed in a crash."

Winlaw says making the point about vehicle size clear was a primary goal of *Car Advice For Women (and Smart Men)*, since that's a major misunderstanding for most women. "The evidence we present in the book on the importance of vehicle weight in providing occupant safety is overwhelming," Winlaw says.

"In creating the book," Winlaw says, "we let our paranoia get the better of us so we could imagine as many of the potential dangers associated with owning or buying a car as possible. That allowed us to outline these dangers for our readers so they could decide how to deal with them."

One of the issues this paranoia raised was the question of pregnant women in cars and whether they should be there at all. "Being in a moving vehicle creates an avoidable risk for a pregnant woman," says Winlaw, "and the faster the car is moving the greater the risk. This is true even if she's wearing a seatbelt, as she should certainly be. Our research showed that this isn't usually a consideration for pregnant women, but it certainly should be."

For a look at some of things about car safety Winlaw and Law recommend in Car Advice For Women (and Smart Men), consult [www.CarAdviceForWomen.com](http://www.CarAdviceForWomen.com) or [www.CarNewsForWomen.com](http://www.CarNewsForWomen.com). The book is only available from those websites.

The two most important messages Car Advice For Women (and Smart Men) want to pass on to all women right away involve sitting too close to the steering wheel and having loose objects in the car.

“Sitting too close to the wheel is a perfect example of women’s lack of basic safety knowledge,” Winlaw says. “It’s widely agreed that a person’s torso should be at least a foot away from the steering wheel, but great numbers of women are sitting a lot closer than that. That’s putting them in greater danger than is necessary.” If they can’t get any farther back and reach the pedals, Winlaw says, there are pedal extenders that can be attached quite cheaply and easily. But there are also new vehicles that have adjustable foot pedals, and women should consider them in future purchases.

Winlaw also advises everyone to do their best to contain loose objects in their vehicles. “The objects in your car are going as fast as the car itself,” Winlaw says, “but the car has brakes and those objects don’t, so they fly around during a sudden stop, a crash or a rollover. If you think this doesn’t concern you because all you have loose in your vehicle is change, some CDs, a cell phone and an umbrella, have a friend toss those things at you from a few feet away until you get the point. These objects can cause you injury, but they can also distract or disable you and in that moment of inattention you could make a mistake that might kill you or someone else.”

### **Safety Topics Covered in Car Advice For Women (and Smart Men) include:**

- Techniques to ensure parking lot safety
- Using a car alarm for safety in the home
- How to drive on a flat tire
- Key maintenance and safety
- Avoiding risk in airport limos
- Driving safely in a fog
- Why compact SUVs are dangerous for kids
- Reducing the dangers of backing up
- Stop cars from rolling away
- Crash-notification and why you need it
- A serious real-world emergency kit
- Why you should forego bumper stickers
- Head restraints and your health
- How to get around buying your kid a car for school
- Are you sure your airbags will work
- Your cell phone isn’t good enough protection
- Anti-theft can put you in danger
- Getting out of a sinking car
- Killer floor mats -- really
- The danger of locking wheels
- Is your route emergency-wise

For more information contact Lynn Marie Town at [lynnmarie@CarAdviceForWomen.com](mailto:lynnmarie@CarAdviceForWomen.com)