

GM misstates fuel economy stats and pays for it... in gift cards

Regardless of how it happened, we commend **General Motors** for its quick action over pasting incorrect (as in better)



fuel economy numbers on about 135,000 2016 **Chevrolet Traverse**, **Buick Enclave** and **GMC Acadia** models sold in the United States.

To compensate, the automaker is offering either debit cards worth from \$450-\$1,500 (depending on the vehicle and accumulated mileage) or an extended warranty.

The estimated compensatory costs are in the \$100 million range. Both offers are quite generous, we think, considering the posted numbers were off by only one to two miles per gallon.



Hyundai has just cemented the lineup of its new luxury brand. Here's the **2017 Genesis G90**.

The beginning of Genesis

We can confirm that the lineup of **Hyundai's Genesis brand** (now a full-blown luxury marque) has been cast in stone, and what an ambitious lineup it is. For the 2017 model year the **G90** and **G80** models (formerly the Equus and Genesis sedans) kick things off. A totally new **G70** entry-luxury sedan will follow for 2018. From that point you can expect both a full-size (three rows of seats) tall wagon, a five-passenger tall wagon about the size of an Audi Q5, and an entry-luxury 2+2 sport coupe that will be fancier, quicker and pricier than the current Genesis coupe. The last two vehicles on the list will arrive for the 2020 model year.

"The Camaro's safety cage is built to resist intrusion in a small overlap crash, and that's good news for Camaro drivers," says IIHS president Adrian Lund.



Why is the CX-9 a gamble? Because it loses rear passenger and cargo space when it's a family machine.

Mazda's big CX-9 gamble

After a decade with only minimal changes, **Mazda** has finally released a successor to the original tall wagon.

The second-generation **CX-9** has shed about 200 pounds, thanks in part to replacing the 3.7-liter V-6 with a turbocharged four-cylinder engine that has less power, but more torque and is more fuel-efficient. We see the turbo-four as a move in the right direction, however we're not so sure about the reduced third-row-seating space as well as the reduction in cargo capacity.

With families being the primary purchasers of these vehicles, the CX-9 will have to rely more on its stylish good looks to woo prospective buyers.



"The Mustang is just one good rating away from earning Top Safety Pick," the IIHS's Adrian Lund says. "Its small overlap rating holds it back."

How safe is your muscle car?

In recent crash tests conducted by the U.S. Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, the **Ford Mustang**, **Dodge Challenger** and **Chevrolet Camaro**

failed to earn Top Safety Pick ratings. The Mustang came the closest, while the Camaro fell short in one category and lacks an available front crash prevention system. None scored particularly well in the institute's small-front overlap test, where a portion of the vehicle hits a fixed object at 40 mph — vehicles are judged by how much "intrusion" affects the passenger compartment — but the IIHS cited the Challenger as most in need of improvement.

In tests of roof strength, the Mustang received a "good" rating, while the Camaro and Challenger rated "acceptable."

Why care about muscle car safety? If that's the concern, why not just buy a Volvo wagon? Answer: These vehicles rack up high crash rates (read: user error) and as such warrant at least as many safety features as other cars.



Extensive intrusion into the Challenger's lower occupant compartment resulted in a poor rating for structure and for leg/foot protection.

TEST DRIVE

2017 Honda Ridgeline

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full-size doors. There's 36.7 inches of rear seat legroom; tops in its class. With six footers in front, like size folks can squeeze in behind, though their splayed legs will absorb much of the space available to a middle passenger. When the rear seats are in place, the space beneath (2.9 cu. ft.) can be used to stow a set of golf clubs, bundles of blueprints, or similarly long items.

Rear seats fold up against the back of the cabin in an easy, one-hand move. So set, there's sufficient space to hold a mountain bike (with wheels on) or a boxed big-screen TV. The seats-up floor is also a handy spot to park your dog, though the ridge on the floor requires some padding. First row storage spots include a roll top center console big enough to hold tools, tablets, or what-have-you.

The front cabin is comfortably carlike. A deck of controls midway up the center stack controls HVAC functions. Ridgeline's top three trim levels get an 8-inch touchscreen atop the stack to access sound system controls. The

interface provides an entryway to popular smartphone apps like Apple CarPlay and Android Auto. The screen's design logic is awkward, though, and it's slower to operate than conventional controls would be, which sticks out in the straight-ahead world of pickup dash design. If you don't need the technology, consider the lower three trim levels (RT/RTS/Sport), which have more direct controls. Sound system aside, Ridgeline offers the full gamut of infotainment and safety technology features, which accumulate as you rise through the six trim levels.

Under the hood, Honda pairs a 3.6L V-6 engine with a six-speed automatic transmission. The engine makes 280 horsepower @ 6,000 rpm and 262 lb.-ft. of torque @4,700 rpm. That's +30 and +15, respectively, compared to the previous Ridgeline, and it feels ideally suited to the 4,515 lb. pickup. There's ample power on tap to pass (under 7 seconds from 0-60) and the drivetrain seems unstressed at speed.

Fuel economy is, in the grand tradition of trucks, mediocre, but an improvement over the first generation version. AWD



TEST DRIVE this vehicle at these preferred dealerships:

LIA HONDA
1258 Central Ave., Albany, NY 12205
518-438-4555 www.liahondaofalbany.com

MOHAWK HONDA
1780 Freemans Bridge Rd., Scotia, NY 12302
518-370-4911 www.mohawkhonda.com

models are expected to return 18 miles per gallon city/25 highway (I logged 23). The 4x2s are predicted to get 19/26. Towing capacity is rated at 3,500 lb. (FWD) and 5,000 lb. (AWD).

Ridgeline feels stable and predictable going down the road. Aside from a little side-to-side jouncing on bumpy surfaces, ride quality is smooth. All-wheel-drive is standard on the top two trim levels; optional on the remaining four. Honda points to their truck's improved off-road capability but — comparing the angles of approach, break over and departure as well as ground clearance — I doubt that Toyota is losing any sleep worrying about

Tacoma losing its off-road dominance.

Ridgeline is, however, quite capable of light off-roading. And more to the point, Honda's torque vectoring AWD system is a confidence booster in wintry travel. That, and the 43 percent increase in towing capability that AWD has compared to FWD, makes the \$1,800 AWD upcharge a worthwhile option.

A regular contributor to the Times Union for more than 20 years, Dan Lyons is the award-winning author of six books, and photographer of 165 calendars. Read Dan's recent reviews online anytime at Timesunion.com/vehiclereviews.

