

Glass sunroof blowouts

Pardon the pun, but it can be a shattering experience when your sunroof glass blows up in a hail of sharp granules. But that's happening more frequently, according to a study by the U.S. National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration. Apparently, such occurrences, although relatively rare, have increased by 71 percent since 2011. One possible explanation is that sunroof failure could be linked to the greater prevalence of sunroofs as they increase in popularity, not to mention the expanding size of so-called panoramic roofs.

The cause of more sunroof blowouts might have to do with their increasing glass area.



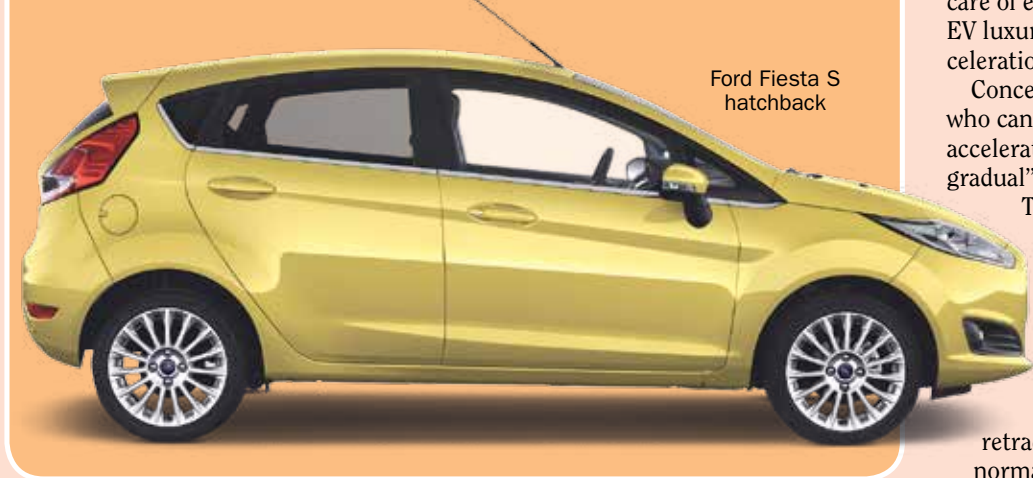
This limited edition 2018 Ford Focus RS comes with a Quaife limited-slip differential on the front axle to help it corner more effectively at high speeds.

Focus returns, but Fiesta...?

For fans of Ford's smaller offerings, there'll be some changes afoot in the coming model years. First the bad news: due to lagging North American sales, it's suspected the petite **Fiesta** (2,600 lb., 120 horses, 27/37 mpg, base MSRP: \$14,115) might be phased out on these shores after the 2018 model year.

The good news is that the next-size-up **Focus** will arrive for 2019 in a slightly larger size (i.e. longer and wider, as well as lighter) and will have more powerful turbocharged four-cylinder engines that should produce better mileage as well. Both the popular, higher-performing **ST** and **RS** models will return, but perhaps a year or so after the launch of the new platform.

A wagon version of the Focus is also in play, but it's not clear if that body shape will wind up in North America.



Ford Fiesta S hatchback

TEST DRIVE

2018 Kia Rio EX

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system with 5-inch display for a 7-inch screen and Kia's UVO3 infotainment system. Buttons surrounding the touchscreen access media, phone and apps, which you can drill down into on the touchscreen. The larger display size is nice, though the screen itself is not responsive to input from a winter gloved hand.

No navigation system is offered, however, the UVO3 system (which includes voice recognition) is compatible with Android Auto and Apple CarPlay, so drivers can use their favorite smartphone-based nav app. As discussed in past reviews, the upside is no need to buy a navigation system for the car. The downside is, you're

only as good as your data plan and your last cell tower.

The sound system on S and EX trims get two additional speakers (for a total of six). While you can access your music apps via the UVO connection, the sound coming out of said speakers is rather underwhelming. The car's target market is more music-oriented than in many other segments, and I think Kia is missing an opportunity here by not offering the option of a butt-kicking sound system.

I put about 800 miles on a 2018 Kia Rio recently, in the course of a couple of days. A long drive like the one I took is a long term study of seat comfort, compressed into a brief timespan.

The Rio's seats drew high marks from



Could this GR HV concept be a high-performance version of the Toyota 86 (inset)?



Toyota's sports-car tease

Word is that the Japan-based automaker might be preparing to bring more than one sporty car to market. We already know that the **Supra** is a go and will likely arrive within the next 12 months, and Toyota is now also showing the **GR HV Sports Concept** in its home country. Since the show car is built on the bones of the **Toyota 86** that was previously labeled the Scion FR-S, it's logical that the GR HV (the GR stands for Gazoo Racing, which is Toyota's competition arm) could become the next version of that coupe. Interestingly, the targa-roof model has a hybrid powertrain with the batteries located in mid-platform to keep the center of gravity low and the front/rear weight distribution close to even. Since the current Toyota 86 is likely to stick around for at least another two model years, its replacement could arrive for 2020.



Tesla now offers a driving mode intended to limit the speed of its Model S's acceleration.

Tesla to leadfoots: Chill out

With a glove box full of crumpled speeding tickets we promise we're going to take care of eventually, we applaud an auto feature that could save us money on this front. EV luxury maker **Tesla** will now offer a "**Chill**" driving mode that limits the the acceleration time of its Model S sedan.

Conceived to create a smoother acceleration for those unaccustomed (or those who can't trust themselves with) battery-powered cars' high-torque (and high-speed) acceleration, the Chill mode will keep the Model S's 0 to 60 time down to a "more gradual" 7.2 seconds.

This may be a welcomed relief from the Model S's previous "Ludicrous" mode, which launched the sedan from 0 to 60 in a whiplash-inducing 2.8 seconds.

And that's not to mention the **Tesla Roadster 2.0** that was unveiled last week, which goes from 0 to 60 in 1.9 seconds, making it the fastest street car ever. (That limited edition "Founders Series" car won't come out until 2020, but you can put your \$250,000 MSRP down now to reserve one.)

Other updates to Tesla S's functioning software additions — which are downloaded to the vehicle while it's parked — include an "Exit" mode, which retracts the seat and steering wheel to allow for an easier egress, returning to normal positions one the driver gets back in.



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760 Central Ave., Albany, NY 12206
518-482-0500 www.destinationkia.com

front-seat passengers. The steering column tilts on all models and EX gets a telescoping feature as well, so it's easy to customize your fit. The car is able to comfortably hold six-footers in front, though at that height or taller, you're effectively limiting/erasing rear seat leg room (unless those up front compromise on their pushback).

Standard safety staples are all present, such as airbags (six), side-impact door beams, ABS, electronic stability control, hill start assist and vehicle stability management. A rearview camera is standard on S and EX (not on LX), and EX cars are

outfitted with an Autonomous Emergency Braking System.

Blind spot detection is not available, so drivers mind their mirrors and revert to old school techniques (turn and look).

Newly refreshed and more refined than previous editions, Rio 4.0 checks in as a strong value pick in the subcompact class.

A regular contributor to the Times Union for more than 25 years, Dan Lyons is the award-winning author of six books, and photographer of 180 calendars.