

Car Talk

Driver Likes Car But Not The Feel Of The Road

BY TOM AND RAY MAGLIOZZI
www.cartalk.com

Dear Tom and Ray:
I recently purchased a 2006 Mazda MX5 with 48,000 miles. When I test-drove the car, it seemed like a great car, and since I always wanted to own a convertible roadster, I bought the car. The problem is that after I bought it, when I drove it from San Diego to Los Angeles, I noticed that this car rides pretty rough. I mean, you can feel every imperfection in the road. Needless to say, my wife, who suffers from motion sickness, is not very happy and never wants to ride in the car again. I have taken the car back to the dealership, and they say that's how Miatas ride. I really don't want to get rid of the car, but I need to accommodate my queen. What can I do to get the ride to be smoother? I have 205 50 16 tires on it. — Pedro

TOM: Pedro, you dope! Haven't you ever heard of the "feel of the road"? That's what sports cars are designed to deliver. If you didn't want to feel the road, you should've bought a Buick.

RAY: Generally speaking, the things that make a car "fun to drive" make it nauseating to be a passenger.

TOM: There's not much you can do now. Little roadsters are designed to have very firm suspensions, so they stick to the road and turn sharply when you drive on those curvy mountain roads. That's the appeal of these cars.

RAY: And the reason they all have convertible tops is so that when the driver's wife needs to puke, she can just lean right over the side with no obstructions, like windows and side pillars.

TOM: You should, of course, check your tire pressure, because overinflated tires will harden a ride. But we're assuming that you or the dealer has done that.

RAY: And if you think a little improvement in ride comfort might be enough to create peace in your household, you can try replacing your tires with four "grand touring" tires, like



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the General Altimax or the Continental ContiPro Contact.

TOM: Tires that are designated "grand touring" concentrate on providing maximum ride comfort and minimal road noise, even at the expense of some cornering ability. That's the exact tradeoff you're looking to make right now.

RAY: But keep in mind that while they may help some, they're not going to transform the Miata into a Lincoln Town Car.

TOM: So, if you think that with a little improvement, your queen might approve of the Miata, try four grand touring tires. But if it's going to take more than little softening to make her happy, don't waste your money on the tires. Instead, put it toward your next car.

RAY: And this time, bring her with you on the test drive. Good luck, Pedro.

Stop the madness! You can stop driving like a knucklehead, and you'll help your car in the process. Learn how your driving habits can harm your car in Tom and Ray's pamphlet "Ten Ways You May Be Ruining Your Car Without Even Knowing It!" Send \$4.75 (check or money order) to Ruin, P.O. Box 536475, Orlando, FL 32853-6475.

Get more Click and Clack in their new book, "Ask Click and Clack: Answers from Car Talk." Got a question about cars? Write to Click and Clack in care of this newspaper, or email them by visiting the Car Talk website at www.cartalk.com.
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Registration Now On For Swimming Lessons At SAC

The Summit Activities Center will be offering American Red Cross Swimming Lessons this winter. The classes will be held Tuesday and Thursday evenings and will run from Tuesday, Jan. 24, through Thursday, Feb. 23. Swim lessons will include Aqua Tots, Preschool, and Red Cross Level 1 through Level 5. Registration for current Summit Activities Center members will begin Monday. Registration for the general public and online registration begins at 11 a.m. today (Tuesday). Online registration is available through the

City of Yankton website at www.cityofyankton.org.
• 5:20-5:55 p.m. — Aqua Tots, Preschool, Preschool, Level II
• 6:6:35 p.m. — Aqua Tots, Level I, Level II, Level III
• 6:40-7:15 p.m. — Preschool, Level I, Level IV, Level V
• 7:20-7:55 p.m. — Level I, Level II, Level III, and IV
For further information, call 668-5234 or visit the Summit Activities Center at 1801 Summit Street, Yankton. Don't forget to follow the Yankton Parks and Recreation Department on our Facebook page.

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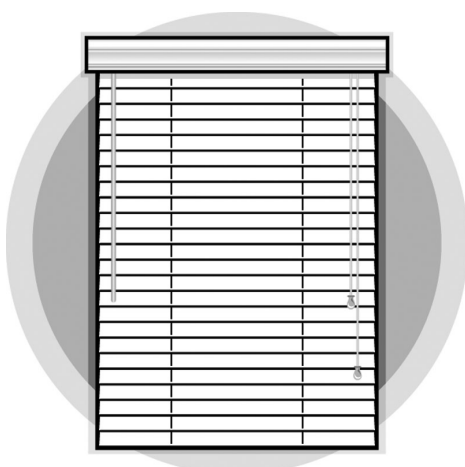
Safety Plans For Window Blinds Too Lax, Critic Say

BY ELLEN GABLER
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A fight to make window blinds safer for children is growing more contentious after manufacturers of the common household product have ignored demands from federal regulators to eliminate exposed cords on window blinds and shades.

The manufacturers, who set standards for their own products, are adopting less-stringent rules that safety advocates say won't reduce injuries or deaths.

"The industry is clinging to the status quo and is refusing to address this very dire safety issue," said Rachel Weintraub, director of product safety with the nonprofit Consumer Federation of America and a member of a task force drafting the new standards. "As frustrating as it has been, it is even more tragic."



About one child each month strangles to death on cords of a window blind or shade, according to U.S. regulators. Children can get caught in the cords that hold the blinds together or the cords that are used to pull blinds up and down.

Last summer, safety regulators in the U.S., Canada and Europe told the window covering industry to enact product standards that would eliminate strangulation hazards. Inez Tenenbaum, chairman of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, gave an October deadline, but the task force, which is heavily influenced by the industry, did not meet it.

Many manufacturers say it isn't feasible to rid window blinds of accessible cords and think it is impractical to eliminate all risk for any kind of product.

"There's common sense, and then there's over-regulation," said Edward Krenik, a lobbyist for the Window Covering Manufacturers Association.

In a statement, Tenenbaum said the proposed standard from the task force "poses too much risk to the safety of children." If the standard isn't strengthened, she said the agency could be forced to pass mandatory standards. But doing so could take years.

Safety advocates and regulators want to rid blinds of cords that children can wrap around their necks, including long operational cords used to pull blinds up and down.

More than 200 children in the U.S. have died in the last two decades from being strangled in window cord-related accidents with blinds and shades, according to the federal safety agency. The annual rate has remained steady, the commission said.

The disagreement over blinds safety standards centers on tweaks suggested by the industry that advocates and regulators say don't eliminate the strangulation hazard.

One example is what is known as tie-down or tension devices. The pieces, which are sometimes made of plastic, fasten to the end of a looped cord that pulls blinds or shades up and down. The device is supposed to be screwed into the wall or windowsill to hold the cord taut. The blinds can then be moved up and down on a sort of pulley system.

In theory, the taut cord reduces the risk that a child can wrap it around his or her neck. But safety advocates and regulators do not think those

devices are safe because they break easily and often aren't installed correctly.

The industry says that under the new standard, tension devices would have to pass durability tests. Also, they can be made so that if they're not installed correctly, blinds won't work properly.

Another proposal would require that a warning label on product packaging say: "For child safety, consider cordless alternatives or products with inaccessible cords."

But safety advocates say the warning doesn't explicitly tell parents not to use the products if children are in the home.

"If their standard is so stringent, why do they have to put the warning on products?" said Linda Kaiser, who founded Parents for Window Blind Safety after her 1-year-old daughter, Cheyenne, strangled in her crib in 2002 from getting caught in the inner cord of blinds near her crib.

The Window Covering Safety Council, which is sponsored by the industry, urges parents to use only cordless blinds in young children's bedrooms.

Some companies do make blinds with inaccessible cords. The blinds move when someone grasps the middle and pushes or pulls up or down. Springs and a pulley system within the product help it work. Other blinds are made so inner cords are shrouded in fabric so they can't be pulled out by a child.

Although that technology exists for some blinds and shades, others are too large or heavy to be lifted without cords, according to the industry; in other cases, blinds on extremely tall windows can only be raised or lowered with an operational cord. Plus, the industry notes, cordless technology can add to costs.

But Bill O'Connor, president of B&W Window Fashions in Waukegan, Ill., said his company has developed a Roman shade that doesn't have accessible cords, including a pull cord, and doesn't cost more to make.

"We can't be that bright. If it's a better mousetrap, why isn't it offered as a standard feature?" he said.

Life In Poetry

The Value Of Mystery In An Age Of Reason

BY TED KOOSER
U.S. Poet Laureate, 2004-2006

A wise friend told me that since the Age of Reason we've felt we had to explain everything, and that as a result we've forgotten the value of mystery. Here's a poem by Lisel Mueller that celebrates mystery. Mueller is a Pulitzer Prize-winning poet from Illinois.

SOMETIMES, WHEN THE LIGHT

Sometimes, when the light strikes at odd angles
and pulls you back into childhood

and you are passing a crumbling mansion
completely hidden behind old willows

or an empty convent guarded by hemlocks
and giant firs standing hip to hip,

you know again that behind that wall,
under the uncut hair of the willows

something secret is going on,
so marvelous and dangerous

that if you crawled through and saw,
you would die, or be happy forever.

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2012 Governor's Conference on Tourism Registration Open

PIERRE — The South Dakota Department of Tourism invites all visitor-related businesses to attend the 2012 Governor's Conference on Tourism, Jan. 18-19, in Pierre.

"In 2011 the visitor industry was faced with many tough challenges, yet persevered," said James Hagen, secretary of the Department of Tourism. "The Governor's Conference on Tourism is a place to discuss those challenges, learn from them, and plan for the year ahead."

The annual conference will feature expert-led sessions on a variety of topics, including tips for online marketing, public relations, social media, and research. New marketing plans for 2012 will be presented, and the 2011 visitor spending fig-

ures will be revealed.

"The Governor's Conference is a place to celebrate the previous year's triumphs, while revealing some new goals for the year ahead," Hagen said. "As we ready ourselves for the coming year, we'll take a look at some plans for 2012, and look forward to the visitor industry's feedback."

Conference registration is now open at www.SDVisit.com. Continue to visit and click on the Tourism Conference icon for updates.

The South Dakota Department of Tourism is comprised of Tourism, the South Dakota Arts Council, and the South Dakota State Historical Society. The Department is led by Secretary James D. Hagen.

60th Wedding Anniversary

Jerry and Colette Koch will be celebrating their 60th wedding anniversary on Monday, January, 9, 2012. They were married in 1952 at Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Church in Bow Valley, NE. The couple is blessed with six children, 22 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren. Their children include Patti (Dan) Eisenbraun, Yankton, SD; Charlotte (Mike) Arens, Springview, NE; Janice (Rod) Schieffer, Sterling, CO; Gary (Candace) Koch, Fordyce, NE; Tim (Janet) Koch, Omaha, NE; and Sandy (Mike) Draper, Omaha. A family gathering is being planned to celebrate this special occasion. The family is also requesting a card shower in their honor. Greetings may be sent to: 55610 891st Road, Fordyce, NE 68736.

Mr. & Mrs. Jerry Koch

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