

## General Motors announces first center mounted airbags (w/ video)

October 3 2011, by Bob Yirka

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General Motors will introduce the industry's first front center air bag to help protect drivers and front passengers in far-side impact crashes where the affected occupant is on the opposite, non-struck side of the vehicle.

(PhysOrg.com) -- General Motors, in a move to make driving automobiles safer, has announced it will be installing center-mounted airbags in three of its 2013 crossover vehicles. The center mounted airbags will be positioned next to the driver to protect occupants against far (passenger) side impacts.

GM has been working on the new airbags for the past three years after discovering that 11% of the fatalities involving people wearing seat-belts and sitting up front in 1999 model vehicles, were due to impacts that occurred on the far/passenger side.

The new air bag pops up out of the console between the driver and passenger, just next to the driver, when a far side impact is detected. The idea is that it will prevent the driver from crashing into someone sitting in the passenger seat if the vehicle they are in is struck by another vehicle on the passenger side. GM says it should also help prevent fatalities when there is no one in the passenger seat when such a collision occurs. Side impact accidents tend to force the upper body of the driver into the empty passenger seat resulting in violent twisting and turning which can cause serious or fatal spine and neck injuries. And it is expected that the new air bag will also help reduce injuries and death in rollover accidents as well.

To develop the new [air bags](#), GM turned to Japanese partner Takata, a leading developer of seat belt, [airbag](#) and other safe driving technology. The center mounted airbags are the first of their kind and GM says it's all part of its continuing effort to make driving automotive vehicles as safe as possible. In its initial run, the new air bags will be installed in the Chevy Traverse, Buick Enclave and GMC Acadia.

Such air bags are not required by the U.S. government, but if they turn out to save as many lives (or prevent as many injuries) as GM believes they will, then the government might make them so at some point in the future.



The front center air bag deploys from the right side of the driver's seat and is designed to provide restraint during passenger-side crashes when the driver is the only front occupant.

GM showed off the new air bags at the Milford Proving Grounds in Michigan to a group of industry analysts and insurance executives and it appears that most, especially the insurance group, were impressed with the results.

**More information:** [Press release](#)

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