

# NEW TECH: The Look of Tomorrow's Cars and Trucks

The polls confirm it: U.S. consumers like technology in their cars. So this fall automakers are serving up a big helping of gizmos under the hood, behind the dashboard, and inside the cockpit. Some will help keep you safer. Others will boost fuel economy. Still others simply make the motoring experience more comfortable and convenient.

Most American drivers are intrigued by new technologies. But cost plays a big role in shaping which features buyers actually choose.

For example, at least two-thirds of Americans list run-flat tires, night vision systems, vehicle stability controls, and sensors that detect objects in the driver's "blind spot" as today's most attractive new technologies in the 2005 U.S. Automotive Emerging Technologies Study by J.D. Power and Associates.

But throw in price, and the order changes dramatically. Night vision drops from second place to 17th when consumers find out the feature costs about \$1,500. Likewise, navigation systems—also about \$1,500—tumble from 8th to 18th.

When price is included in the equation, this year's favorite emerging technologies on the J.D. Power list are stability control (\$300), premium sound systems (\$400), high-definition radio (\$150), and run-flat tires (\$600).

Which features do today's car buyers actually choose? Side-impact airbags are a top seller, with four out of five shoppers saying they want that technology in their new vehicle, according to J.D. Power and Associates' 2005 Feature Contenting Report. And nearly 40% of buyers say they want satellite radio. Other popular equipment includes antilock brakes and split fold-down seats.

## Hybrids and Fuel Economy

Option price isn't everything, of course. Consider the booming interest in hybrids. These vehicles—which add an electric

motor and self-charging battery system to the usual piston engine—carry a price premium of \$5,000 or more. It takes years to pay off that investment in the form of better fuel economy. (Best results occur in city driving; fuel savings are less impressive on the highway.)

How popular will hybrids become? Today they command only about 0.5% of all U.S. vehicle sales—roughly 200,000 units. But analysts figure the ratio will grow to at least 11% by 2012 as the number of hybrid models quadruples. Sport utility vehicles and midsize cars are expected to become the market's most "hybridized" segments.

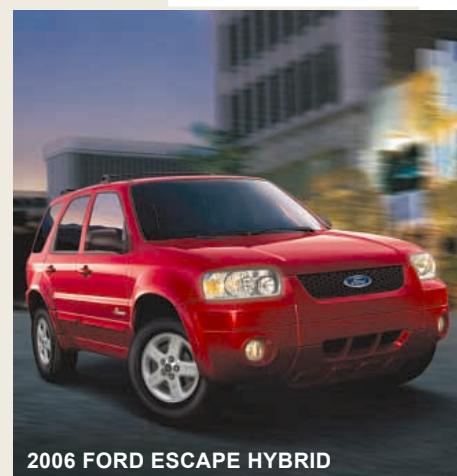
## Safety

Most vehicles come with antilock brakes already. "Smart" airbags that know when and how powerfully to inflate depending upon the occupant in front of them are taking hold quickly. So are stability control systems that help keep you from skidding or rolling over during sharp maneuvers.

Coming on strong this year and beyond: radar-controlled cruise control and brakes, "steerable" headlights, rearview camera systems, lane departure warning devices, and passenger-side mirrors that tilt down when you back up to help you see the curb.

## Comfort and Convenience

Premium surround sound systems are high on the "must-have" lists of today's auto shoppers, according to researchers at J.D. Power. There's also growing interest in cars equipped to wirelessly connect their audio system with the driver's cell phone or make it easy to plug in an iPod or other portable music device.



2006 FORD ESCAPE HYBRID

## INNOVATION AT FORD

This fall Ford Motor Co. declared that innovation—focused upon safety, technology and design—will drive everything the company does from now on. What does that mean for consumers?

For one thing, consumers will see more vehicles from Ford that save gasoline with hybrid technology or are equipped to run on entirely different fuels such as ethanol.

Last year the company debuted the world's first hybrid SUV, the Escape Hybrid. By 2010, it expects to sell 250,000 hybrid models annually and make the technology optional in up to half the Ford, Lincoln and Mercury brand vehicles it sells.

Ford also is stepping up its "flex-fuel" program—piston-powered vehicles that can run on gasoline, ethanol or any blend of both. For 2006, that option will be available on such models as F-150 pickup trucks and Ford Crown Victoria, Mercury Grand Marquis and Lincoln Town car sedans.

Chairman Bill Ford Jr. also vows to keep the company at the leading edge of safety innovation. Achievements to date include the BlockerBeam, a device that makes bumpers on large SUVs more compatible with those of passenger cars; Safety Canopy, a system of front-to-back side curtain air bags that cushion occupants in rollover accidents; and Roll Stability Control, an anti-rollover technology Ford describes as the the world's most sophisticated.