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Only a convertible manages five stars in rollover ratings

WASHINGTON (AP) — Of 21 vehicles rated for the likelihood of a rollover, only a convertible won the government's highest mark, according to results released Monday by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.



The Z4 showed the least propensity to roll over in a crash.

BMW

The BMW Z4 convertible received five stars in NHTSA's latest ratings.

The Honda Pilot and the Nissan Murano were the only sport-utility vehicles earning four-star ratings out of 17 SUVs. Both the front-wheel drive and four-wheel drive versions of the Murano were rated.

The Ford Explorer Sport Trac SUV and a rear-wheel drive version of the Jeep Liberty performed the worst, earning two-star rollover ratings on NHTSA's five-star scale.

Both the four-wheel drive and rear-wheel drive versions of the Sport Trac were rated. Ford Motor spokeswoman Carolyn Brown said NHTSA's ratings — which measure rollover propensity through a mathematical formula, not a moving test — fails to reflect Sport Trac's performance on the road.

"We believe that it is among the most competitive vehicles out there," she said.

NHTSA insists the ratings are a good predictor of vehicle behavior. But the agency also plans to adopt a moving test this year that will measure the way a vehicle negotiates sharp turns.

A four-wheel drive version of the Jeep Liberty got three stars in NHTSA's ratings, the only vehicle tested in which different

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versions received different rollover ratings. A DaimlerChrysler spokeswoman didn't return a telephone message seeking comment about Liberty's performance.

SUVs earning three-star ratings were: the BMW X5, the Honda Element, the Kia Sorento, the Mercedes-Benz ML350, the Mitsubishi Outlander and the Toyota 4Runner. NHTSA rated front-wheel and four-wheel drive versions of the Element, the Sorento, the Outlander and the 4Runner. Only four-wheel drive versions of the X5 and the ML350 were rated.

Of four smaller vehicles rated, the Subaru Outback wagon and the compact Saturn Ion got four stars. The Subaru Forester, considered a medium passenger car by NHTSA, earned three stars.

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