

Ford F-250 Ranks as Thieves' Favorite

The Ford F-250 has replaced the Cadillac Escalade as the favorite target of thieves, according to the Highway Loss Data Institute (HLDI).

"General Motors has put a lot of effort into new antitheft technology, so that may help explain the decline in the Escalade's theft rate," says HLDI Vice President Matt Moore. "On the other hand, sales of the Escalade have fallen in recent years, so there may be less of a market for stolen Escalades or Escalade parts."

New antitheft technology on the Escalade, as well as its waning popularity, are two likely reasons the luxury SUV has fallen from first to sixth place in the ranking of vehicles with the highest rates of insurance claims for theft, he said.

Thieves continue to target large pickups and large SUVs at higher rates than other vehicles. Number one on this year's list, the four-wheel-drive F-250 crew cab, which has a claim frequency of 7 per 1,000 insured vehicle years, or nearly 6 times the average for all vehicles. An insured vehicle year is one vehicle insured for one year, two for six months, etc., Moore said.

Theft rates in general are declining, thanks in large part to the spread of ignition immobilizers, which prevent vehicles from being hot-wired and were standard in 89 percent of 2012 models, Moore said. Fewer pickups than cars or SUVs have the feature as standard, which may help explain the higher theft rates for pickups. However, it doesn't explain the high theft rate of the F-250, which had a standard immobilizer for 2010-12, the model years covered in this year's report.

Many pickup claims result from the theft of equipment from the truck bed, and that may be the case with some of the F-250 claims. HLDI's data don't distinguish theft of vehicle contents or components from theft of a whole vehicle.

Each year, HLDI analyzes theft losses for vehicles from the three previous model years. This is the first year since 2003 that some version of the Escalade hasn't topped the list of vehicles with

the highest theft claim rates, Moore said.

This year the Escalade has a claim frequency of 5.5 per 1,000 insured vehicle years. Though still more than four-and-a-half times the average, that's about half the rate for 2007-09 Escalades reported in 2010. Only the regular four-wheel-drive version of the Escalade is included in this report. Other versions didn't have sufficient exposure or claims, Moore said. To be included, a vehicle must have at least 20,000 insured vehicle years or 100 claims.

The Escalade always has had a standard ignition immobilizer, but thieves still could tow away the SUV on a flatbed truck. Since 2010, the Escalade has had a steering column lock as well, Moore said. An improved version of this feature, along with an inclination sen-

sor that sets off an alarm when the vehicle's angle is changed, was added in the 2012 model year.

Moore said one indication these new features may be helping is that the average loss payment of each Escalade claim has fallen to \$6,508, suggesting fewer whole-vehicle thefts. In contrast, the average loss payment for 2007-09 Escalades was \$11,934. Other antitheft features, including a wheel-lock system, are available as options on 2012 models.

HLDI's theft numbers differ from other rankings because they are based on the number of insured vehicles on the road. In contrast, information published by the National Insurance Crime Bureau simply lists the most frequently stolen vehicles. As a result, that list usually reflects the most commonly driven models.

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New Car Sales Expected to Sizzle In Last 6 Months

New-vehicle sales are kicking off the second half of 2013 in very strong fashion, with new-vehicle retail sales in July expected to increase by 12 percent from a year ago, according to a monthly sales forecast developed jointly by the Power Information Network (PIN) from J.D. Power and LMC Automotive.

New-vehicle retail sales in July 2013 are projected to come in at approximately 1,127,100 vehicles, a 12 percent increase from July 2012.

The seasonally adjusted annualized rate (SAAR) in July is expected to be 13.2 million units, nearly the same robust level exhibited in June 2013. According to J.D. Power, retail transactions are the most accurate measure of true underlying consumer demand for new vehicles.

PIN data shows that in the first half of 2013, new- and used-vehicle transaction prices have increased 3 percent.

In addition, utilization of longer-term vehicle loans and leasing, have increased when compared with the same period a year ago.

The customer-facing transaction prices for new vehicles are averaging \$28,824, and incentive spending per vehicle is averaging \$2,847 in the first half of 2013.

The average used-vehicle price in 2013 is \$18,751.

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