

Consumer Alert: Windshield Replacement Risks

Know What to Ask Auto Glass Technicians to Protect Your Safety

A cracked windshield isn't a cosmetic problem. It can be a safety problem that should be replaced as soon as possible. It impairs your vision when you're driving and it puts your passengers at risk in a crash.



Most people don't know how important the windshield is to their safety. You'd get the airbags fixed if you knew they wouldn't work 100 percent in a wreck. If the windshield is cracked, then in some vehicles you should consider the airbags broken.

When a vehicle with a cracked windshield is in a crash, the passenger airbag may fail to deploy properly because the cracked windshield is not strong enough to withstand the airbag's force.

The real tragedy is even if you have the cracked windshield replaced, a bad installation of the replacement windshield may leave the vehicle more unsafe than with the original cracked windshield. The glass and adhesive should meet industry standards and the installer should follow the industry's best practices as advocated by the Auto Glass Replacement Safety Standards (AGRSS).

Often the main safety issue isn't the quality of the windshield glass, but the quality of the windshield installation. If the correct adhesive is not used, or if the adhesive isn't allowed enough time to cure, then the windshield could fly out of the vehicle during a crash. Without a good windshield, not only would the passenger airbag not properly deploy, but the vehicle's roof could be crushed in a rollover.

When you need a windshield replacement, ask the auto glass technician some basic questions before the installation:

- **Will the old adhesive be removed from the vehicle frame?** If the old adhesive isn't removed down to the adhesive manufacturer's recommended level, the fit may not be tight and the new adhesive won't bond right between the windshield and the frame. The adhesive bond must meet 500 pounds per square inch.
- **Will the installer wear gloves to keep from contaminating the glass?** If oil and dirt get on the edges the new adhesive (called urethane) may not bond correctly.
- **Will the new urethane adhesive stand up to the high deployment pressure of airbags?** The best available manufacturer equivalent urethane adhesive should be used, not butyl tape. Ask for urethane adhesive made by Dow, Sika or the original equipment supplier of adhesives to the original car makers.
- **How long does the urethane adhesive need to set until the vehicle can be driven?** Every urethane has a "safe drive-away time." Ask for adhesives that allow you to safely drive away in one hour. This also reduces the chances of leaks occurring. The last thing you want is a leaky windshield.

After the new windshield is installed, inspect it before driving the vehicle. An auto glass technician who follows industry best practices should have given you a service checklist with the safe drive-away time. Don't drive the vehicle before the curing time is completed. Here are the signs of a proper installation:

- **See if the windshield is centered on the vehicle.** The glass should have a relatively smooth curve, not waves or bows. Some aftermarket windshields do not fit perfectly.
- **Look at the molding around the edge of the windshield.** It should be flat and unbroken. If it's wavy or has gaps, it should be re-installed.
- **Make sure the glass is flush with the vehicle's frame.** If the glass is not flush with the frame, a salvage windshield or a defective windshield may have been installed. A salvage windshield is taken from another similar vehicle, but the adhesive may not bond properly. A defective windshield may not be manufactured to the exact dimensions to fit in the vehicle's frame. This will definitely cause leaks and the windshield may be loose.

Glass Doctor uses OE (that's glass-speak for "original equivalent" manufactured by a company that supplies the auto makers) quality glass windshields. *Glass Doctor* also guarantees its windshields for 12 full months against breakage and for a lifetime against leaks. Ask a local *Glass Doctor* shop for details. To schedule an appointment call Glass Doctor at 1-866-318-9304 or go to www.glassdoctor.com.

Glass Doctor voluntarily supports the best industry standard glass replacement procedures approved by AGRSS. AGRSS is the only auto glass replacement safety standard in the U.S. More than 155 of the 370 *Glass Doctor* independently owned and operated locations nationwide are accredited by AGRSS, and more will be accredited throughout the coming months. Consumers can find AGRSS-approved locations at www.safewindshields.com.

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