

Gadget gold mine! 1980 Lincolns computerized to the hilt

Trying to gain media mileage to match increases in their cars fuel efficiency, Ford Motor Co. pulled the wraps off 1980 Lincoln Continentals and Mark VIs at a news conference last

week. To nobody's surprise, the cars have gotten smaller. They've shed 800 pounds from 1979 vehicle weights, and vehicle wheel-bases are some 41 inches shorter. The largest available engine on the 1880 models is a 351 CID, down from 18x year's standard 400 CID. The standard 1980 engine is a 302 CID equipped with electronic fuel injection.

Those developments together with the introduction of a four-speed automatic transmission utilizing an overdrive gear resulted, the company said, in an estimated mileage increase of 38 percent, or about four miles per gallon. The company estimates mileage for the 1980 models at 16 mpg. This is the largest single year percentage gasoline mile-age increase in Ford's history. The car's cruising range with the 351 CID engine is 500 miles "with a tank five gallons smaller than the Cadillac's," a spokes-man said proudly. Company spokesmen predicted sales of 180,000 1980 models, up from sales of 154,000 this year.

INTERIOR DIMENSIONS in the new models are generally ightly larger than in the 1979 model counterparts.

The exterior size changes are remarkably subdued. Both the Continental and Mark are still big cars, and they look it — only

when the 1990 models are viewed next to 1979 models does the shrinkage become easily apparent.
For the gadget-conscious, the 1990 models are a gold mine. An in-dash mini-computer can monitor brake pressure, oil pressure, braddlights, tallights, brake lights, alternator, engine temperature and doors and trunks afar. It also flashes a message when there are 50 miles or less to an empty fuel tank. The computer will monitor gasoline mileage, and when programmed to do so, provide data on average speed, time caroute, miles to destination and estimated time of arrival. Both the speciometer and radio also register in digital display. The computer is standard on Mark VI and optional on the Continental.

Continental.

Optional on both cars is a "keyless entry system," a five-button, number-coded door lock.

The Continentals are available in two-door Town Coupes and four-door Town Cars. Available for the first time this year is a four-door Mark. Still available are special edition designer series cars. The collector's series has been replaced by a signature series.

THE OVERDRIVE transmission is standard and offers a .87-to-1 fourth overdrive gear that engages at about 40 mph under minimum throttle. The overdrive operates at about 1,000 engine RPM at 55 mph and reduces passenger compartment engine noise levels noticeably.

The overdrive enabled the use of a higher-ratio rear axle, at 3:08 for the 302 CID-equipped models compared to 2.47 axle ratio on the 1979 cars. The new axless can be expected to contribute to higher mileage.

Pickups are safe, say U-M researchers

Based on an analysis of collision fatalities, researchers at the University of Michigan's Highway Safety Research Institute (HSRI) have found that vans and pickup trucks "are not demonstrably less safe" than passenger cars. While production and juse of vans and pickup trucks has in creased greatly in recent years, these vehicles are exempt from some federal motor vehicle safety standards regulating the performance of passenger cars used in the United States, the researchers noted.

Focusing on data obtained mainly through the federal Patal Accident Reporting System, HSRI researchers James O'Day and Richard J. Kaplan, analyzed single- and two-vehicle accident and fatality statistics for four categories of vehicles: passenger cars, pickup trucks, vans, and station wagons built on a truck chassis. One of the findings was a comparatively low rate of fatalities among occupants of vans involved in collisions.

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The U-M researchers said vans and small trucks "appear to perform somewhat better than passenger cars on a scale designed to reflect gross safety aspects."

But they cautioned it is not clear whether this finding relates to "inherent safety" of the vehicles or to the types of accidents in which they are commonly involved. "Compared to passenger cars, pickups have a considerably higher (accident) involvement rate, but only a slightly higher fatality rate (for occupants). Vans, which are about as equally involved (in accidents) as passenger cars, have a lower fatality rate," reported O'Day and Kaplan.

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For passenger cars, the U-M researchers found a rate of .349 accidents per 1,000 vehicles, while corresponding figures for the other types of vehicles were .452 for pickup trucks, 249 for vans, and .073 for truck-chassis station wagons.



They found occupant fatality rates, per 1000 vehicles, of .242 for passenger cars, .264 for pickup trucks, .182 for vans, and .053 for truck-chassis station wagons.

"The reasons for these differences most likely lie in the different use patterns of these vehicles," speculated O'Day and Kaplan. "A high proportion of the vans, for example, may be used as delivery vehicles in urban areas, and be used as delivery vehicles in urban areas, and the involved in much lower speed accidents and thus fewer fatalities."

The researchers found the ratio of in-vehicle fatalities to accident involvements is highest for the station wagons built on a truck chassis.

"The numbers of accidents involving such vehicles are done to be a disproportionately large ratio of revenue fatalities to involvements. It so, this is probable statalities to involvements, it so, this is probable accused these vehicles are designed to carry large numbers of passengers, and frequently do."

The U-M researchers also tried to focus specifically on vehicle safety features in two-car collisions by plotting the ratios between the number of people killed in the smaller car and the difference in vehicle weight. As expécted, said the U-M researchers, this analysis indicated that chances of survival in the larger vehicles are greater than those in the smaller vehicles.

"All four types of vehicles are performing at about the same level in terms of protecting their occupants when the two vehicles are of about equal weights," said the researchers.

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New asthma uncovered

Some people diagnosed as emphysema patients may instead have a newly discovered — and reversible — condition called "hidden asthma."

That's the surprising finding of an extensive study of patients at the University of Colorado Medical Center. The study's purpose was to evaluate a pilot program of home-based care for

emphysema patients. Nearly 20 per-cent of those diagnosed as suffering from Irreversible emphysema respond-ed early in treatment to bronchodila-tors and corticosteroids. All patients entered into the study with at least 50 percent lose of lung function. The unexpected, fast response to treatment of some patients prompt-ed claser examination.

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