

Press Release

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Volvo Safety Concept Car makes driving that much safer

For Immediate Release

ROCKLEIGH, NJ -- January 8, 2001 -- There were three new car models in 2000 - and now at the start of 2001, Volvo Cars is taking a major step further into the future. The main theme of the Volvo Safety Concept Car (SCC) is "superior vision". However, the car also employs a variety of technologies that enhance personal security and improve passive safety systems. SCC thus points the way to a new dimension in research and development into car safety.

The Volvo Safety Concept Car is a vision of the developments in safety that car buyers can enjoy in the future. It is also evidence that Volvo Cars and Ford Motor Company are at the very leading edge in the development of technology for safer driving.

"With the quick pace of technological development, we are constantly gaining access to smaller yet more powerful computers, new sensors and so on. Volvo's approach is to utilise the breakthroughs in an intelligent and sensible way. We combine advanced electronics with new materials and new mechanical design solutions to create customer benefits. One example of this is the Volvo SCC and its unique enhanced all-round visibility," says Hans Gustavsson, head of purchasing and product development at Volvo Cars.

Helen Petrauskas, safety manager at the Ford Motor Company, continues:

"More than 90 percent of all important information to the driver comes in the form of visual input through the car's windows and windscreen. If we improve the quality of this visual information, we will also improve the driver's ability to make the right decisions in difficult situations, thus avoiding collisions."

Built for the eye

That is why the forward-thinking Volvo Safety Concept Car is built for the eye. Not merely in terms of aesthetic appearances and lines pleasing to the eye, but rather because the car has been designed around the driver's eye to ensure better vision and visibility.

When the driver gets into the seat, a sensor identifies the location of his or her eye. The seat then automatically adjusts to suit the position of the eye so that the driver gains the best possible field of vision. Once this is done, the floor, pedals, steering wheel and centre console including the gear lever all move to ensure that all the controls are within convenient reach.

The driver thus enjoys the best overview over what is happening both outside the car and in the instrument panel.

Number one in safety

The Volvo SCC is the result of close cooperation between Volvo Cars (appointed as the Ford Group's Center of Excellence) and the parent company, the Ford Motor Company. The car, which was designed at the Volvo Monitoring and Concept Center in California, displays advances in several research and development projects in the fields of safety and security. It clearly highlights the spearhead competence and the resources that the company has at its command.

"It is our goal to remain the world leaders in the field of automotive safety. With the SCC, we're showing that we have the resources to do just that," continues Ford's Helen Petrauskas.

Curved B-posts

The Volvo SCC has a number of additional functions that improve visibility:

- The driver can see through the windscreen's supporting pillars - the A-posts - owing to a metal box construction combined with see-through Plexiglas. The B-posts - the pillars between the front and rear doors - curve inwards following the contours of the seat frame to offer an unobstructed field of vision to the offset rear.
- A radar unit measures the distance to traffic at the rear and to vehicles alongside the car, and alerts the driver to vehicles in the offset rear "blind spot".
- In addition, rearward-facing cameras integrated into the door mirrors can show the driver what is in the blind spot.
- The headlight beams adapt to the road, for example by directing the beam in the direction that the driver is turning at a crossroads or in a curve.
- An infrared light enhancer boosts nighttime vision beyond the reach of the headlights.
- A forward-facing camera monitors the position of the car on the road and alerts the driver if there is any tendency to veer off course.
- The brake lights flash to alert following traffic in harsh brake application.

Increased crash safety and personal security

In addition, the Volvo SCC features a number of exciting features in the areas of active driving safety, crash protection and personal security.

- Together with the car's B-posts, the front seat frames form a safety cage that is at least as effective in roll-over accidents and side-impact collisions as conventional B-posts are.
- The car has two different types of 4-point safety belt: the X4 Criss Cross Belt and a conventional 3-point belt that is supplemented with an additional diagonal chest belt. This V4 Centre Buckle Belt is a new 4-point safety harness that has a centrally positioned buckle and shoulder straps that form a "V" across the chest.
- The rear seat has two electrically adjustable seat cushions whose height can be steplessly altered to give children the most comfortable and the safest seating position, irrespective of their height.
- At the front of a car there is a cowl bag - a concealed external airbag that inflates to give pedestrians and cyclists added protection in the event of a collision.

The remote control unit becomes a communication centre

The remote control unit has been developed into the Volvo Personal Communicator (VPC), and it has a number of new features:

- A fingerprint sensor personalises the remote control unit.
- The driver only has to grasp the door handle to unlock the door - and the car can be started without a key.
- The VPC transmits the driver's personal setting parameters to the car, which automatically makes the necessary adjustments to the driver's seat, steering wheel, pedals and so on.
- The system can even be pre-programmed with a number of destinations so that the navigation instrument is preset at the same time as the driver unlocks the door.
- A heartbeat sensor registers both human and animal heartbeats when the car is parked. The sensor is activated if anyone breaks into the car and hides inside it - or if a child or pet is left inside by mistake.
- If the driver is more than 100 metres from the car, the VPC can still transmit this information - via a cellphone. It is also possible to transfer information from a PC or hand-held computer.

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