



Add-on Vehicle Safety Systems

Advanced driver safety technology is available on nearly all but the least expensive new cars. Rearview cameras, blind-spot monitoring, and lane-departure and forward collision warning systems are becoming commonplace. For older cars, many manufacturers now offer add-on systems that can afford you some of the same protection that's built into new cars. Here are seven systems that can help keep you and your car motoring safely.

Back-up Camera: Research from [Kids And Cars](#) shows that of the 1,219 vehicle-related, non-traffic child fatalities between 2006 and 2010, 34 percent were due to vehicle "back-overs" (child is run over by a car backing up). Rear-facing cameras can help save lives *and* keep you from backing into inanimate objects. These video systems use a small video camera for a wide-angle view of the area directly behind your car. When in reverse, the camera's output is displayed on a video screen mounted in your car. There are several types, from plug-and-play wireless systems to professionally installed systems that integrate with other installed system screens.

Forward Collision Warning: According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, approximately 30,000 vehicle occupants die in auto accidents every year. Half are the [result of frontal crashes](#). A forward collision warning system is designed to help you avoid a crash by alerting you if you're getting too close to slow/stopped cars in the lane ahead. The advanced warning is designed to give you time to brake or take corrective action.

Blind Spot Detection: NHTSA reports that as much as five percent of collisions in the U.S. are a result of an improper lane change. Blind Spot Detection systems alert you to vehicles or other objects beyond your peripheral vision. BSD uses small cameras in each side mirror to continually monitor the lanes on either side of your vehicle. LED status lights signal you when there is a vehicle in your blind spot.

Lane Departure: These systems use a small forward-facing camera to monitor the road ahead of you. The system recognizes the painted lane markings on the road and alerts you audibly and visually if your vehicle drifts out of its lane without using your turn signal. Lower cost systems using smartphone technology are on the horizon.

Proximity Sensors (Parking Aids): Proximity sensor systems use a dash-mounted display to produce audible and visual alerts when you get too close to another object. They can make parking much easier, especially if you drive a large van or SUV. In addition, proximity sensors are more than just a parking aid. They're an active safety feature that can also help you avoid low-speed (think parking lot) and back-over accidents.

Text Suppression Systems: There are several smartphone apps that detect speed in the car and automatically shut off the texting and email capability on the phone. Some will auto respond to the text or call, others disable sounds and some even monitor speed and give warnings to the driver. Most don't require additional hardware (other than the smartphone) and many are free for both Android and iOS platforms.

Tire Pressure Monitoring System: Tire pressure is important enough that TPMSs are now required on all new cars. Using sensors mounted inside the wheels or in the valve stem caps, a TPMS alerts you when the air pressure in one or more tires drops below a critical threshold. Most aftermarket systems use electronic valve stem caps that communicate wirelessly indicating that a tire is low, or displaying the actual air pressure in each tire.

Many of these systems are do-it-yourself, but know your limitations. And if using a professional, be sure to choose one with a National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence certification or Mobile Electronics Certified Professional designation.

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