

Auto

S U V S - A S M A R T C H O I C E F O R Y O U R F A M I L Y ?

What weighs 3,000 pounds and acts like a hockey puck? Answer: a four-wheel drive SUV.

SUVs have become the vehicle of choice for many families. They often have more room than a typical car and some people think they're safer on the road. But are they?

While larger vehicles are generally safer than smaller ones, SUVs are two to three times more likely than cars to roll over in accidents. They're also three times more likely to be involved in fatal accidents.

Many people think four-wheel drive (4WD) makes SUVs safer on snowy, icy, or wet roads. While 4WD improves traction when starting to move, you actually have a greater chance of losing control of an SUV when driving on icy or wet roads. Not only does the height of SUVs make them more likely to tip over, the truck-style suspension limits maneuverability in emergencies.

The weight of SUVs also makes them harder to stop. Think back to what your science teacher taught you about Newton's law of inertia. The teacher said, "A body in motion stays in motion until it's stopped by another force." It's a basic law of physics. When you're driving on ice, the other force that stops you might be friction, but more often it's another car, a ditch, or a tree. Stopping on ice is hard for everybody, yet SUV drivers sometimes are lulled into a false sense of security.

SUVs also tend to be gas-guzzlers and because they're not bound by emission standards for cars, they tend to be hard on the environment.

Before you purchase any vehicle, you should become an informed consumer to make the smartest choice for you and your family.

