

# **Information Concerning Side Airbag Deactivation**

Questions & Answers Prepared by BMW of North America

September 2000

Q1: Are side airbags available on BMWs?

A: Front door side airbags were introduced as standard equipment in the 5 and 7 Series (optional in 1997 3 Series 4-door sedans as of January 1997) in model year 1997 and they are standard equipment on all BMWs since 1998 model year.

Rear door side airbags are available as optional equipment on 5 and 7 series, beginning with model year 1998, on 4-door 3 Series models beginning with model year 1999, and on X5 vehicles since introduction.

BMW's Front Head Protection System is standard equipment on 5 and 7 series, beginning with model year 1998, on 4-door 3 series models beginning with model year 1999, on 2-door 3 series models beginning with model year 2000, and on X5 vehicles since introduction.

***Starting with the model year 2000 7 Series, and model year 2001 5 series, Rear HPS (Head Protection System) is installed in conjunction with the rear door side airbags.***

Q2: Are there any precautions that should be taken when seated next to a side airbag?

A: For vehicles equipped with side airbags, all occupants should be properly restrained (children in appropriate child restraint systems; larger children and adults using the safety belts) and sitting upright. Never let an occupant's head rest on, or near any side airbag. If this warning is not heeded, the inflating side airbag could cause a serious or fatal injury.

Q3: I have small children and I know they should sit in the rear seat. Should I order the optional rear door side airbags?

A: ***Passengers are safer with rear-seat side impact airbags than without them.***

However, children must be properly positioned and restrained to ensure their safety and avoid possible injury from an airbag deployment. (See your owner's manual and the in-vehicle safety tips card to ensure proper positioning and restraint.)

For vehicles equipped with side airbags, all occupants should be properly restrained (children in appropriate child restraint systems; larger children and adults using the safety belts) and sitting upright. Never let an occupant's head rest on, or near any side airbag. If this warning is not heeded, the inflating side airbag could cause a serious or fatal injury.

***If you are unable to ensure that children are always properly positioned (e.g., an unrestrained, belted child may fall asleep against the door), BMW recommends:***

- 1. do not order the rear side airbag option***
- 2. or, if your BMW is already equipped with them, have the rear side airbags deactivated free of charge.***

Q4: What is the BMW Head Protection System?

A: BMW's Head Protection Systems, or HPS, are inflatable restraints intended to help provide the driver and outboard front and rear passengers with head protection in a severe side impact. HPS works together with the door-mounted side airbags; which help protect the torso, and other features such as BMW's interlocking door anchoring system, to help provide the optimum in side impact protection.

**The front HPS** consists of an Inflatable Tubular Structure (ITS) concealed above each front door, within the windshield-pillar and roof rail trim material. In a severe side impact, the system deploys and forms a tubular structure approximately 5 feet long and 5 inches in diameter, anchored at the forward end to the lower A-pillar, and at the rear, to the roof rail above the rear door. The ITS is now positioned where an occupant's head could contact the side of the car (window, windshield- or center-pillar, roof rail) or an intruding object. The sloping position of ITS enables it to help provide protection for occupants of different sizes and seating positions.

The ITS is designed to remain inflated for several seconds, to help provide protection beyond the initial impact, as well as help keep the occupant inside the vehicle, for example, during a rollover after a severe side impact.

**The rear HPS** consists of an airbag concealed above each rear door, within the roof rail trim material. In a severe side impact, the system deploys and forms an inflated structure with a volume of approximately 6 liters. The rear HPS is now positioned where an occupant's head could contact the side of the car or an intruding object.

Q5: Can **the front** HPS be ordered without **the front** side airbag?

A: No. HPS and the front door side airbags are designed to work together as a side impact protection system for front seat occupants. However, in the event of a front door side airbag deactivation, the HPS system remains active to help provide additional head protection in a side impact. **(Front side airbag deactivation is not available on 1999 and later 3 series 4-door, and on 2000 and later 3 series 2-door models).**

**Q6: Can the rear HPS be ordered without a rear side airbag? (Rear HPS is currently available on model year 2000 and later 7 Series, and model year 2001 and later 5 series only)**

**A: No. HPS and rear door side airbags are designed to work together as a side impact protection system for rear seat occupants. However, in the event of a rear side airbag deactivation, the HPS system remains active to help provide additional head protection in a side impact. The model year 2000 and later 7 series, and model year 2001 and later 5 series are the only BMW automobiles currently equipped with the rear HPS.**

**Q7: Can the front door airbag be deactivated without having to deactivate the front HPS?**

**A: Yes. Your BMW Center can shut off the front door side airbags without shutting off the front HPS.**

**Q8: Can the rear door airbag be deactivated without having to deactivate the rear HPS?**

**A: Yes. Your BMW Center can shut off the rear door side airbags without shutting off the rear HPS.**

**Q9: Can the rear HPS be shut off and the rear side door airbag remain active?**

**A: Yes. Your BMW Center can shut off the rear HPS without shutting off the rear door side airbag, although this procedure is not recommended by BMW.**

Q10: Does HPS present a risk to out-of-position occupants?

A: This situation is not critical for HPS. The system is tailored to help protect the head of an adult occupant, while the side airbag system helps protect the torso. Therefore, HPS is relatively small and deploys with minimal energy. Further, since the system deploys downward (in contrast to a front airbag which deploys toward an occupant) from the A-pillar (**front**) and roof rail (**rear HPS**) and places itself between the occupant's head and the vehicle interior, it does not present an "aggressive" environment to the vehicle occupants.

Another benefit of HPS is its deployed location, which is essentially "out of reach" to small-size occupants and children, secured in child seats and infant carriers, even those that are out-of-position.

However, it should always be remembered that the NHTSA recommends placing all children 12 years old and younger in the rear seat. That is the safest place. For many years, BMW has recommended that children ride in the rear seat, regardless of whether the vehicle has a passenger airbag.

This recommendation is based on the fact that the rear is the safest place for every passenger and not just on the potential risk associated with a passenger airbag and an unrestrained, or improperly restrained or positioned occupant.