



Built for size and safety

Ian Lamming reaps the benefit of the Alhambra's five star safety rating

UNTIL we need them they are just letters on a specification sheet; ABS, EBFD, ESP, TCS.

But when you need those little alphabet clusters you do thank the Lord above that someone invented them.

Picture the scene; it's the A1 and conditions are fine, relaxed in fact. Then out of nowhere bowls a car off the slip road. It veers out of control from the inside lane and hits a car in the outside before ploughing into the central reservation.

The Alhambra is on its nose trying to avoid the stricken vehicles, anti-lock brakes coming into play and allowing the big people carrier to steer safely around the debris. Then it is back on the power and clear just in case there is a multiple pile up on my tail.

It all happens so quickly I can't even tell you what the cars are, or even the colour. Goodness knows what causes it and I just hope everyone is okay.

It's a near do, no doubt about it, and a salutary reminder of what can lay around the next corner – even when you are driving on a straight.

Thinking about it, it could have been a lot worse but the SEAT Alhambra saves the day. ABS doesn't really stop you any quicker, what it does is give you the confidence to bury the brake pedal into the bulkhead and keep it there without any fear of and skidding. It also means that you can brake to

the max and still have control enough to steer. The electronic brake-force distribution monitors each wheel, maximizes stopping power and stops lock-up.

Electronic stability programme keeps every corner of the car where it should be and pointing in the right direction and traction control means that when you boot the throttle to make good your escape you don't spin the wheels. When it works, when you need it most, it is a lifesaver. Bless automotive technology.

The way this big comfortable people carrier handles situations like this is impressive and makes you feel safe and secure inside its capacious interior. That is very important to know because this SEAT will seat seven of your closest and dearest, cosset them on long journeys and get them there and back in safety.

It's not a bad drive either thanks to high-set driving position, swathes of glass and a perky 2.0 litre diesel that returns 40+ miles per gallon.

In many ways it's a minibus but it doesn't handle like one and over the hills and through the Dales it is actually pretty good fun. It's also good in town and despite being big it proves easy to park in multi-storey car parks and tightly packed streets.

But it's the A1 where it really shines, not only being effortless at the legal limit but by keeping me safe from harm.

Fact File:

SEAT Alhambra

Engine: 2.0 turbo diesel

Power: 140PS

0-62mph: 10.9 secs

Top speed: 120mph

Combined miles per gallon: 50.4

Transmission: six speed manual

Insurance: 18

CO2 g/km: 146