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Snapshot, 1963: Vertical crash testing with a Porsche 904

Lead

Modern-day crash testing is a hugely complex procedure involving winches, valuable dummies and ultra-slow-motion cameras. Back in the mid-60s, however, Porsche used a slightly less complicated (but equally spectacular) method of testing the effects of a head-on collision...

Today, Porsche operates a dedicated crash testing facility in Weissach, filled to the brim with cutting-edge technology designed to pinpoint even the very slightest weakness in a new car's body structure. Before this facility was in operation, however, a large crane and Newton's law of universal gravitation were employed – as this Porsche 904 Carrera GTS sports-racer, captured at the moment of impact, rather alarmingly illustrates. To pass stringent FIA certification, Porsche's engineers calculated that dropping the 904's 530kg empty bodyshell from a height of 10m would accurately simulate a 30mph impact. More than 70 of these types of tests were carried out in total, on various models, testing the front, rear and roof structures. It was this kind of meticulous testing and attention to detail that helped Porsche, with the lightweight 904, to claim a series of victories, including an outright win at the 1964 Targa Florio.

Photo: Porsche Classic

Gallery



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