

**Transport Canada takes our safety to heart!**



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**Ottawa, Ontario** -- I was recently on my way to the nation's capital, not to see the Senators crush the Montreal Canadiens, but to attend a press conference on electronic stability control systems. Representatives from Transport Canada's Ergonomics and Crash Avoidance division had invited members of the media, the Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers' Association (CVMA), the *Société de l'Assurance Automobile du Québec* (SAAQ) and many other organizations. The event followed a previous press conference held on July 18.

Stabilitrak, Active Handling, AdvanceTrac, Precision Control Plus... it's easy to get lost amid all these appellations. Transport Canada decided to help us out. Their goal is to make every automaker use the same referent: electronic stability control, or ESC.

But what is ESC exactly? It's an important active safety feature that's finding its way into more and more vehicles. Basically, the system relies on sensors to constantly monitor the vehicle's actual path and the driver's intended path based on steering inputs. If the data is conflicting, there's necessarily a problem. ESC will then step into play by applying specific braking to one or several wheels in order to prevent the car from skidding further and potentially losing control. It serves as a guardian angel whose mission is to help you stay on the right track... and not end up upside down.



GM's Stabilitrak system was put to the test.

The latest press conference aimed to promote an upcoming education campaign on ESC systems and their benefits, which can no longer be ignored. New car buyers and the general public have to be aware of the life-saving potential of this technology. Transport Canada is currently looking for a universal logo that would be easy to recognize. Several drafts are being studied; it's only a matter of choosing the right one.

The aforementioned education campaign is inspired by a recent European initiative from the *Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile* (FIA). Jacob Bangsgaard, director of Mobility and the Automobile, came to Ottawa to talk about the eSafety program ([www.chooseesc.eu](http://www.chooseesc.eu)), which is essentially a media campaign with Michael Schumacher on the benefits of ESC. The FIA set up a huge media event in front of Chateau de Versailles, in Paris. Through a series of emergency maneuvers, consumers were able to compare ESC-equipped vehicles with others that did not feature the system. Positive comments were aplenty... except from municipal officials who thought this was nothing more than a publicity stunt. Yet, the FIA campaign is supported by 36 corporate and public organizations. That's why Transport Canada wants to follow this example.

In my opinion, the benefits of ESC are real. However, many believe it to be a mere gadget solely intended to make money and dilute the driving pleasure. My answer to these people is that, in most cases, ESC will only intervene as a last resort. In fact, these systems allow you to further exploit the potential of your car because you (almost) don't have to worry about losing control. Some systems can even be completely turned off to grant hardcore enthusiasts total freedom behind the wheel.

In short, the next time you purchase a new vehicle, have the sales representative arrange a road test with an ESC-equipped model. If every customer does the same, Transport Canada will be able to say: mission accomplished!

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