

**Remarks prepared for  
James F. Ports  
Deputy Administrator  
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration  
For the European Union ESC Consumer Awareness Campaign Event  
May 8, 2007  
Rome, Italy**

Thank you, David, Madam Commissioner, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is my pleasure to be here with you in support of your launch of the “Choose ESC!” consumer awareness campaign.

David Ward summarized the letters ESC very well last night. He said that ESC could stand for the obvious, Electronic Stability Control, or it could mean Electronic Stability Celebration, or it could stand for Electronic Stability Challenge. And I think that describes what this summit is all about. We have a great technology that we are both celebrating the use of but we still have some challenges.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration views electronic stability control as the potentially greatest lifesaving technology since the seat belt. ESC is a proven and effective means to reduce deadly single-vehicle crashes by helping drivers maintain control of their vehicles, keeping them in lane and on the road.

Researchers here in Europe, in Japan, and in the United States have studied the actual experience of different vehicle populations in different driving environments and all have come to remarkably similar conclusions about the high level of ESC effectiveness in the real world. This unusually strong body of supporting research has led us, in the United States, to issue a rule just last month to require installation of ESC as standard equipment in all new vehicles weighing 4,536 kilograms or less built in the U.S. by the 2012 model year.

Our engineers estimate ESC will save between 5,300 and 9,600 lives annually and prevent between 156,000 and 230,000 injuries. Our economists estimate the average cost of ESC to be \$111 U.S. dollars per vehicle, assuming the model already features antilock brakes.

ESC systems use automatic computer-controlled braking of individual wheels to help the driver maintain control in those situations where a vehicle lacking ESC would most likely skid out of control and leave the road. A 2005 NHTSA study estimated that ESC reduced fatal, single-vehicle crashes for passenger cars by 35 percent and... nearly twice that much, 67 percent, for sport utility vehicles.

Now...generally speaking... NHTSA prefers to encourage technological advancement through the consumer marketplace rather than through regulation. Our experience with nearly three decades of the New Car Assessment Program, called NCAP, has clearly demonstrated to us that a well-informed consumer can and does create a marketplace of safer vehicles. However, when electronic stability control was first developed by Bosch and first arrived in the United States from Europe, and we learned about its immense life-saving potential, we felt we had to step in to insure that all new vehicles would be equipped with this life-saving technology.

As responsible regulators, we must move forward thoughtfully, but we also must do so promptly when the timing is right. You are all familiar with the

expression “Time is money.” In the area of vehicle safety, **time is also lives**. This is particularly true for a high-benefit technology like ESC.

Forty-six percent of model year 2007 vehicles have ESC as either standard or optional equipment. These installations have all been voluntary and we applaud auto manufacturers for that effort. Our final rule will step up the requirement that 55 percent of passenger vehicles under 4,536 kilograms should be equipped with ESC starting with the 2009 model year. One hundred percent of light passenger vehicles are required to have ESC as standard equipment by the 2012 model year that starts in September 2011.

The car is usually the most complicated piece of technology most people ever own. And it’s only going to get more complex as new technologies are introduced.

Our hope at NHTSA is to foster rapid technological advancement of safety in passenger vehicles by continuing to inform the public about safety features –including advanced crash-avoidance technologies. Other proposed enhancements to our NCAP program will encourage consumer demand for technologies like lane departure warning and rear-end/forward collision

warning. And, we are reviewing our current ratings of technologies and looking to improve that rating system so we can better encourage manufacturers to incorporate them into their vehicles.

Your “Choose ESC!” campaign will promote safer European roadways as motorists learn about ESC’s life-saving potential, and they demand it in their vehicles.

NHTSA is such a strong believer in ESC that we are moving ahead now with a proposal to the WP.29 to develop a Global Technical Regulation on ESC. The GTR will not only contribute to saving lives, but also, by establishing common requirements and helping to increase demand for ESC, it will promote additional product improvements and cost reductions. We will strongly urge WP.29 to make ESC a top priority.

The GTR would specify requirements for ESC systems to reduce loss-of-control of vehicles and the risk of death and serious injury resulting from loss-of-control. The United States envisions that the GTR would specify definitional requirements for ESC systems, and require that vehicles be equipped with those systems, and meet dynamic performance tests. Any

elements of the GTR that could not be resolved by the Working Party would be identified and dealt with in accordance with established protocol.

So, again, I commend you on your “Choose ESC!” campaign, and I thank you for this opportunity to address you today.

Thank you, XXXX