

ESC – 3 Letters for Fleet Safety

Why You Should Always Choose Electronic Stability Control

If your company policy is “Safety First,” will you spend \$450 to save a life?

That is the retail price of Electronic Stability Control (ESC), the most important vehicle safety innovation since the invention of the seatbelt. ESC detects and prevents many skids by automatically braking individual wheels to help steer the vehicle where the driver intends to go.

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) reports that ESC prevents:

- 40% of single-vehicle crashes
- 56% of fatal single-vehicle crashes
- 77 to 80% of fatal single-vehicle rollovers

Although ESC is now available in most vehicle models, many buyers are still opting not to purchase ESC. They may say their vehicles are driven at low speeds. Some rely on driver training. Others complain that manufacturers sometimes bundle ESC with other costly options.

These reasons pale compared to the benefits of ESC. Transport Canada reports that 48% of serious crashes are caused by skidding. ESC helps prevent skidding at high or low speeds, on bare pavement or slippery roads, in summer or winter, and for all vehicle types.

Transport Canada estimates that, if all passenger vehicles had ESC in 2006, there would have been 225 fewer deaths and 755 fewer serious injuries. The IIHS

estimates that ESC will save up to 10,000 U.S. lives per year, ranking as the most important safety device after seatbelts. This translates into nearly 1,000 lives per year saved in Canada.

How does ESC work?

ESC does what no driver can do, detecting and correcting skids in 1/25th of a second, applying individual brakes and reducing engine power, often before the driver realizes the vehicle has skidded. ESC is profoundly effective for cars, vans, pickups, and SUVs, and is even more valuable for eighteen-wheelers or buses.

ESC helps drivers recover from human errors. Passive safety devices such as seatbelts or airbags help you survive a crash. However, the safest crash is one that never happens. ESC is an active safety device that helps keep vehicles on the road, in their lanes, and under control.

ESC is most effective in reducing loss of control crashes that cause serious injury or death. Rollovers account for one-third of all fatalities. By maintaining forward direction, ESC prevents 70 to 90% of fatal rollovers.

ESC can also make crashes safer. Skidding sideways into an object exposes heads and torsos to deadly crushing injuries. If a crash is inevitable, ESC helps the vehicle crash frontally so the bumper, body structure, seat belts, and other passive safety devices can protect occupants.

ESC does not improve traction or enable vehicles to corner faster. Traction de-

ESC is sold under many trade names such as Electronic Stability Program, Vehicle Stability Assist, Vehicle Dynamic Control, Stabilitrak, and Advance Trac. You can Google “Names of ESC” for a complete list. The following links take you to more information or videos on ESC:

- <http://www.tc.gc.ca/roadsafety/tp/tp14651/vs200701/menu.htm>
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electronic_Stability_Control
- <http://www.chooseesc.eu/>
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pQq-4KYBxsl>
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=85ZmW1gq10c>
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K3m24bjkfg0>
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dmw4LhWdDRM>



pends on tires gripping the road surface. Transport Canada cautions, “Even if your vehicle is equipped with ESC, you must continue to drive prudently.” ESC helps drivers maintain control within the limits of available traction. Proper tires enable ESC to achieve its full potential.



OVERSTEER
Rear wheels skid
Vehicle spins around



UNDERSTEER
Front wheels skid
Vehicle plows straight

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The U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration was so impressed with ESC that it fast-tracked a new regulation. Starting in September 2008, 55% of all new passenger vehicles must have ESC, and that percentage will be phased upward annually to 100% in three years. By then, Canada, Australia, and much of Europe will also have ESC laws. Quebec enacted the world's first ESC law, mandating ESC in 2005 for carriers of dangerous goods without data recorders. Canada's ESC law for passenger vehicles is expected by September 1, 2011.

ESC market

Worldwide demand for ESC components is exploding as auto makers rush to equip all their vehicles with ESC. ESC costs them only \$100 per passenger vehicle, and computer chips are being developed to integrate new additional stability systems such as Roll Stability Control and Trailer Stability Control.

Although ESC has been available since 1995, public awareness in Canada has been very low. However, retail demand will grow. About 90% of new vehicles sold

in Sweden, Denmark, and Germany now have ESC. Some U.S. and Australian insurers are now offering premium discounts for vehicles with ESC. A few Canadian auto retailers are already expressing reluctance to accept trade-ins without ESC.

Why buy ESC?

- ESC saves lives.
- ESC reduces injuries and human downtime.
- ESC reduces vehicle downtime.
- ESC reduces repair costs.
- ESC reduces insurance costs.
- ESC may increase resale value. █

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