

# EU plans to make stability control mandatory

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The European Commission says it will make electronic stability control (ESC) systems in new cars mandatory from 2012 onward.

An EU-wide survey by the European New Car Assessment Program, NCAP, found that only 42 percent of new cars in Europe are equipped with the systems. Most installations are in luxury models, not in the smaller cars that account for the bulk of European sales, the survey found.

Automakers blame a lack of consumer awareness for slow acceptance of ESC in Europe. But Anna Pastore, marketing communications director of Bosch Chassis Systems Control, argues that availability is the biggest problem, especially in the smaller-car segments that make up the bulk of European sales.

"Today, there are people who know about ESC but can't buy it – not because of the €300 extra it costs, but because it's not available on the model they're interested in," Pastore told *Automotive News Europe*.

All too often stability control is confined to the upper end of a small-car range, forcing buyers to trade up to a larger engine size or higher trim grade to obtain it, she said.

Pastore also condemned the practice of bundling ESC with other options, creating a higher effective cost for the consumer.

"ESC should be available on all versions of all cars in every market," she said, noting that between 60 and 70 percent of mini- and small-segment models had restricted ESC availability.

## US doing better

The FIA, the International Automobile Federation, warns that by 2010, "the year in which the EU aims to reduce road traffic fatalities by half," ESC use will have reached 82 percent in North America, but only 61 percent in Europe.

An electronic stability control system senses when a driver begins to lose control of the vehicle. It then automatically applies braking pressure to individual wheels and adjusts engine power to help avoid skidding.

Experts say the technology could reduce the risk of accidents in Europe by as much as 20 percent, especially in wet or icy conditions.

The move toward compulsory adoption by the European Commission mirrors a similar action by the US National Highway and Transport Safety Authority (NHTSA), which ordered in April that the stability systems become mandatory on all North American light vehicles starting in 2012.

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