

ITS International

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European ChooseESC! campaign launched

A major pan European campaign to promote the life-saving technology Electronic Stability Control (ESC) was launched in Italy last week. The 'ChooseESC!' campaign revealed estimates that if all cars in the EU had the system over 4,000 lives and 100,000 injuries could be avoided.

The campaign warns that slow penetration of the technology into new cars will make it harder for the EU to reach its target to cut road deaths by 50 per cent by 2010. In the United States ESC will become mandatory for all new cars in 2011, but so far there is no equivalent initiative by the European Union. Under the patronage of European Commissioner Viviane Reding and FIA President Max Mosley the 'ChooseESC!' campaign was launched at the Bridgestone European Testing ground in Aprilia, near Rome.

Commenting on the launch Mosley said: "There is no doubt that ESC could contribute significantly to the European Union's goal to halve the number of road traffic fatalities by 2010. But to achieve this, much more needs to be done to inform the consumer about why they must choose ESC when buying a new car. It is frustrating to see that the use of ESC in new cars in Europe is actually falling behind the USA. We should be leading the world in the introduction of a technology that was invented in Europe. Although ESC is often standard equipment in luxury and large cars, in smaller family cars it is not. Across Europe only 42 per cent of new cars are equipped with ESC. We want governments in the EU to give incentives, such as tax breaks to encourage people to buy cars with ESC on board. Thousands of lives could be saved and huge crash costs avoided so it makes sense to give the public a reason to choose ESC on their next car".

At least 40 per cent of fatal road accidents are the result of skidding. Studies show that ESC could reduce skidding accidents by up to 80 per cent. However, there is a low take-up rate of this life-saving technology across Europe and a lack of consumer awareness of its safety benefits (as shown in a recent authoritative Commission Eurobarometer study).

A major feature of the campaign launch was the release by the European New Car Assessment Programme (Euro NCAP) of a country by country survey of the availability of ESC across Europe. Commenting on the survey the Chairman of Euro NCAP Claes Tingvall, said: "This is about everything that Euro NCAP stands for - safety for the European consumer. We must do all we can to raise awareness of ESC's importance. Car manufacturers respond to the demands of customers but customers will only demand ESC when they become aware of the benefits. The media and organisations such as fleet buyers can play a pivotal role in increasing this awareness and in helping to bring pressure to bear on manufacturers and distributors to fit ESC as standard on all new cars, in all countries."

The participants at the event include all the major stakeholders in intelligent vehicle safety systems including motoring organisations, consumer groups, motor industry and related service suppliers, national authorities from EU member states and representatives of the news media. The 'ChooseESC!' event is organised in cooperation with Euro NCAP and the European Commission.