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RACV wants stability system on new cars

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Victoria's motoring body wants car makers to install Electronic Stability Control (ESC) systems on new vehicles, after a study showed they could halve the number of single-car accidents.

ESC technology helps drivers keep control of their car during extreme steering manoeuvres by keeping the vehicle headed in the driver's intended direction, even when it exceeds the limits of road traction.

The Monash University Accident Research Centre (MUARC) study confirmed ESC systems reduced the risk of crashes involving one car by up to 50 per cent.

Single vehicle crashes on Victorian roads in 2006 accounted for 43 per cent of driver fatalities and about 2,000 serious injuries each year.

The RACV's chief engineer of vehicles Michael Case said consumers should insist ESC be fitted to any new vehicles they purchase, particularly four-wheel drives.

"The safety specifications we set for vehicles today will affect crash risk and injury outcomes for the next 20 years that these vehicles are likely to remain on the road," Mr Case said.

"ESC is currently being fitted to around 40 per cent of new vehicles sold in Victoria, which means there is significant room for improving the rate at which this potentially life saving technology is introduced to the Australian and New Zealand vehicle fleets."

Results of the research, which was commissioned by 13 state and federal road agencies and automobile clubs, were launched in Melbourne by international road safety expert, David Ward.

Mr Ward, director general of the International Automobile Federation (FIA) Foundation for the Automobile and Society, said the results proved the effectiveness of ESC technology in Australian conditions.

The study showed ESC systems were particularly important for 4WD vehicles where single vehicle crash risk is high and injuries are often severe.

It analysed crash patterns of 7,700 ESC-equipped vehicles made between 1997 and 2005 that had been involved in crashes across Australia and New Zealand between 2001 and 2005.

These were compared with crash patterns of about 203,000 vehicles without ESC that crashed during the same time period.

The study found a reduction in the risk of single vehicle crashes of 25 per cent for ESC equipped cars and 51 per cent for ESC equipped 4WD/SUVs.

In single vehicle crashes involving a driver injury there were even bigger reductions with 28 per cent for ESC equipped cars and 66 per cent for ESC equipped 4WDs.

This story was found at: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2007/11/14/1194766753287.html>

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