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Electronic Stability Control to reduce car accidents by 20 per cent says EU

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eSafety technology will become a crucial tool to change the fact that each year 40,000 people die and over one million are injured in road crashes in the EU, says the European Commission.

Loss of control (e.g. skidding) has been identified as the main cause of traffic accidents involving serious injury or death. As a result Electronic Stability Control (ESC) is becoming the most promising eSafety technology on the market. ESC is an important active safety device, which can help Europe meet its goal of halving road fatalities by 2010 as set out by the EU in 2001. A Europe-wide 'Choose ESC!' campaign will be launched at the Bridgestone European Testing ground near Rome on 8th May 2007.

Commission Vice-President Günter Verheugen, Commissioner for Enterprise and Industry Policy, said: "The benefits of ESC are undisputed. In line with the CARS 21 programme, we are preparing the obligatory installation of ESC into new passenger cars via international harmonisation. Until it becomes mandatory, the voluntary choice of ESC is more than welcome."

European Commissioner Viviane Reding, responsible for Information Society, said: "It's proven, ESC saves lives! Over 80 percent of drivers who know about ESC say they will choose it for their next car. The Commission sees 'Choose ESC!' as the first step towards all new cars fitted with ESC by 2012."

FIA President Max 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."

ESC senses when the driver loses control and automatically applies braking pressure to individual wheels to help stabilise the vehicle and avoid skidding. This technology could reduce the risk of accidents by as much as 20% especially in wet or icy conditions. However, there is a relatively low take-up rate of this life-saving technology across Europe and consumer awareness of its safety benefits should be improved (as shown in a recent Commission Eurobarometer study). The introduction of ESC is part of the package of measures proposed by the Commission in its recent Communication on the CARS 21 High Level Group to improve safety on European roads through an integrated approach involving all stakeholders.

The Rome launch will feature the release by the European New Car Assessment Programme (EuroNCAP) of an EU wide ESC availability survey. The event will also include live demonstrations comparing the performance of a car with and without the system engaged.

The launch will also feature an international workshop with high level participation from the U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and representatives of Australia's State of Victoria. The NHTSA has recently proposed an international standard for ESC systems at the United Nations World Forum for Harmonisation Vehicle Regulations (WP29), whilst a similar ESC awareness campaign was recently launched in Victoria.

Participants at the event will include all the major stakeholders in intelligent vehicle safety systems such as motoring organisations, consumer groups, motor industry and related service suppliers, national authorities from EU member states and representatives of the news media. The 'Choose ESC!' event is organised in cooperation with EuroNCAP and the European Commission.

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