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Business road safety leaders welcome ESC focus in crash tests
6 November 2008

Campaigners promoting road safety to businesses and public sector organisations across the UK have welcomed 2009 changes to the crash test European New Car Assessment Programme that puts the focus on life-saving electronic stability control (ESC).

RoadSafe, which manages the Government's 'Driving for Better Business' programme, has been at the UK forefront of the Europe-wide 'Choose ESC!' campaign promoted by eSafetyAware, which for a number of years has called for the standard fitment of the technology to all new cars.

Research by the Department for Transport has shown that vehicles equipped with ESC are 25% less likely to be involved in a fatal crash than those without it. That equates to 380 fewer fatal crashes on UK roads and the reduction of injuries to 7,800 people a year.

Euro NCAP announced the radical overhaul of its crash test programme this week. From February 2009 it means that ESC must be standard equipment on new models for them to achieve a top five-star safety rating.

RoadSafe director Adrian Walsh said: "ESC saves lives. Therefore, the changes to the Euro NCAP crash test programme should encourage more motor manufacturers to fit the technology as standard to their models.

"With businesses responsible for buying the majority of new cars in the UK I would encourage all fleet decision-makers to look for the new five-star symbol when it is launched in February next year – until then choose a car with five stars and EESC"

He added: "When staff are involved in road crashes the impact on business costs and company productivity is enormous. Investment in safety therefore offers huge cost-savings, crucial with the UK and global economies on the brink of recession with 2009 forecasted to be an extremely tough year.

"Investment in safety starts with employees driving 'safe' cars and there is no doubt that models equipped with ESC are safer than those without. It therefore makes sense for companies to base their fleet choice lists around cars that are equipped with ESC."

Currently just over 50% of the new cars on sale in the UK are equipped with ESC as standard. Changes to the Euro NCAP crash test programme are designed to increase that figure to 100% as soon as possible.

Mr Walsh added: "If fleets focus on only operating cars with ESC as standard they are undoubtedly taking action to help their staff avoid crashes. In addition, because the overwhelming majority of new cars are bought with corporate cash, when company cars are defleeted the

proliferation of ESC-equipped cars in the used car market will rise. In turn this means that many more secondhand cars buyers will benefit from the technology so potentially helping to further reduce death and injury on the UK's roads.”

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