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Target set for eCall debut

A system, which it is claimed could save a life every hour on Europe's roads, was among many safety initiatives discussed during the 2nd Transport Research Arena (TRA).

The in-vehicle eCall system is an emergency call generated either manually by the vehicle occupants or automatically via the activation of sensors after an accident, and 2009 is the target for all new vehicles to be equipped with the pan-European emergency call technology. The service aims to be operative for all vehicles traveling within Europe irrespective of their country of origin.

When activated the in-vehicle eCall device will establish an emergency call carrying both voice and data directly to the most appropriate emergency response service (normally a 112 Public Safety Answering Point/PSAP).

According to experts, research into road accidents has shown that victim survival rates are linked to the time it takes to provide medical care.

"With eCall, rescue services will get the accurate location data and their response time could thereby be reduced by up to 50% in rural areas and 40% in urban areas. The use of eCall has been estimated to decrease the number of severe road injuries and fatalities by 5-15%

Many delegates also highlighted the benefits of another eSafety system, ESC (electronic stability control), which stabilises the vehicle and prevents skidding within the physical limits by active brake intervention on one or more wheels and intelligent engine torque management. ESC systems combine the functions of ABS (anti-lock braking system) and TCS (traction control system) and complement them with directional stability control.

The conference was told that several studies have proved that ESC "significantly reduces the number of fatalities, on average between 15 and 20%. It especially has an impact on slippery road surfaces and in other situations in which a driver loses control of the vehicle."

The eSafety Support is a European Commission-funded project assisting the eSafety initiative in its goal of reducing the number of fatal road accident in Europe.

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