

Intelligent cars: life-saving technologies need stronger support by industry and policy-makers, says Commission

Technology that prevents rear-end collisions could eliminate 4,000 accidents per year across the EU if just 3% of cars had it by 2010. Technology that helps you stay in lane, or to overtake, could prevent 1,500 accidents per year if only 0.6% of cars had it by 2010. And technology that wakens drowsy drivers could help prevent 30% of fatal motorway crashes and 9% of all fatal accidents. So says the European Commission, in a new drive to accelerate car buyers' take-up of smarter, safer and cleaner technologies, launched today.

"Intelligent cars can help solve our key road transport problems: safety, traffic congestion and energy consumption", noted Information Society and Media Commissioner Viviane Reding. "But citizens and policy makers cannot be expected to invest in or to promote car safety technology unless its benefits are clear. This is why I call for strengthening industry and policy efforts to make intelligence through information and communication technologies an integral part of all vehicles built in Europe".

"Intelligent" systems can help drivers to avoid accidents, and can even call the emergency services automatically in the event of a crash (see [IP/05/134](#)). They can also be used in electronic traffic management systems or to optimize engine performance, thus improving energy efficiency and reducing pollution. With the help of information and communication technologies, good progress is being made towards the EU goal of halving road deaths by 2010, but there are still over 1.4 million accidents and 40,000 fatalities on EU roads each year. Current research indicates that human error is involved in almost 93% of accidents, which cost around € 200 billion, or 2% of EU GDP. Traffic congestion now affects 10% of our road network, and costs €50 billion per year, or 0.5% of EU GDP – and investigations show that up to 50% of fuel consumption is due to traffic congestion or poor driving; all problems which can be solved through information and communication technologies.

Take-up still too slow

More than 20 years after the introduction of anti-lock braking systems (ABS), some cars still lack it. Electronic Stability Programme (ESP) systems, which improve driver control in slippery conditions by distributing power or braking effort to the wheels that most need it, took 10 years to achieve a market penetration of only 40%. These, and newer systems, such as braking assistance, lane-departure warning, collision avoidance and active pedestrian protection based on detection and warning need to be taken up faster, and spread from top-of-the-range models to cheaper ones as quickly as possible.

Intelligent car initiative

The Commission's intelligent car initiative – which is part of the EU's i2010 strategy – , will address the need for a stronger take up of new technologies to make cars safer, cleaner and more efficient. The intelligent car initiative has three aims:

- co-ordinate the efforts of stakeholders, citizens, Member States and industry to accelerate the development and take-up of these technologies.
- support R&D on smarter, cleaner and safer vehicles, with funding from the EU's seventh research framework programme (FP7) and facilitate the take-up and use of research results. This should include a set of field operational tests to assess in real-world environments the impact of eSafety systems on driver behaviour and driving dynamics (EU intelligent car research priorities are fully supported by the European Road Transport Research Advisory Council - ERTRAC), and
- build awareness of the benefits of e-safety technologies, so as to stimulate demand among drivers. This work will include regular technology demonstration events and targeted TV programmes.

The Commission's intelligent car initiative will be unveiled by Commissioner Viviane Reding at the **Intelligent Car Demonstration Event** which will take place on Thursday, 23 February, from 10:30 onwards, at the Brussels Autoworld Museum, and will be followed by a show of new prototype cars which already use information and technologies. This event will be open to the Brussels press corps.

Further info:

http://europa.eu.int/information_society/activities/esafety/index_en.htm

http://europa.eu.int/information_society/doc/factsheets/048-esafety.pdf