

Press Release

Assistance Systems and Safety Equipment

Safety First: Inner Values of a Car More Important than Outward Appearance

- Many electronic lifesavers are already available in small cars
- Experts: assistance systems offer significantly better safety
- Look at safety equipment when buying a used car as well

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An electronic emergency braking system and other driver assistance systems in cars are more important than an off-road look, metallic paintwork or smartphone connectivity, DEKRA's experts are reminding car buyers. People who use a vehicle with modern safety systems can considerably reduce their risk of accident and injury.

Accident researchers estimate that there have been 5,000 fewer traffic fatalities every year in the European Union since the introduction in 2014 of mandatory electronic driving dynamic control systems, such as ESP, for all vehicles, as well as emergency braking and lane-keeping warning systems for trucks and buses.

The electronic lifesavers are already in widespread use, also in smaller cars. ESP and up to seven airbags are standard in modern small cars and for an additional price, city emergency braking systems, collision/fatigue warning systems, high-beam assistants, adaptive cruise control and speed limit displays are sometimes available. LED headlamps and electronic aids for keeping and changing lanes are also used widely in the compact class.

According to experts, active emergency braking systems in particular, which warn the driver of an impending rear-end collision and automatically initiate emergency braking if necessary, result in a higher level of safety.

"These kinds of systems mean that it's considerably safer to drive than before," says Markus Egelhaaf, accident researcher at DEKRA. "The investment in safety is certainly worthwhile." However, as the effectiveness of the systems is heavily dependent on the model generation and manufacturer, it is wise to take a close look at the equipment packages available in the relevant models. Modern assistance systems are generally available in newer series.

This is also an important aspect in purchasing a used car. "Safety should not be put on the back burner here, either, so look out!" emphasizes Egelhaaf. Before

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2014, registered vehicles, at least in the lower vehicle classes, did not automatically have electronic stability control, referred to as ESP or ESC, on board. With new cars that have been re-imported, care must also be taken that the lower price is not also accompanied by a lower standard of safety. The devil is often in the detail here.

Buyers of older used vehicles should look at whether the stated safety systems are actually available and work. DEKRA research has revealed that the older a vehicle is, the more frequently defects occur. On average, in more than one in ten vehicles between three and eight years old, the ESP/ASR system, airbags or antilock brake systems were not functioning correctly.

Workshops and experts can often use a special system check to determine whether the systems are working correctly, to detect hidden defects in electronics and potentially high additional costs and, even more importantly, to avoid reductions in safety.

The vehicle classification in the Euro NCAP crash test gives an important reference for occupant safety in the event of an accident. The vehicles are rated with one to five stars on the basis of different crash tests and safety features. With one star, the risk of injury to the occupants and other party in an accident is very high and with five stars, it is very low.

However, DEKRA experts warn that the increase in safety achieved by modern assistance systems will be negated again by excessively quick and risky driving or the use of bad tires. Egelhaaf: "Modern vehicle technology can compensate for some driver errors but it cannot override the laws of physics. Even the best technology cannot help those who take too many risks on corners or icy roads. Only responsible, defensive driving can help here."

About DEKRA

DEKRA has been active in the field of safety for more than 90 years. Founded in 1925 in Berlin as Deutscher Kraftfahrzeug-Überwachungs-Verein e.V., it is today one of the world's leading expert organizations. DEKRA SE is a subsidiary of DEKRA e.V. and manages the Group's operating business. In 2017, DEKRA estimates to have generated sales totalling approximately 3.1 billion Euros. The company currently employs more than 43,000 people in more than 50 countries on all five continents. With qualified and independent expert services, they work for safety on the road, at work and at home. These services range from vehicle inspection and expert appraisals to claims services, industrial and building inspections, safety consultancy, testing and certification of products and systems, as well as training courses and temporary work. The vision for the company's 100th birthday in 2025 is that DEKRA will be the global partner for a safe world.