

Friday 18 September, 2009

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Editor's Blog

286 - WOMEN WANT TO DRIVE SAFER CARS Safety number one priority when choosing a car 08/09/2009



THERE'S some irony in this piece of research I came across. Women place safety as their number one priority when buying a car, yet are 30% less likely to know about the existence of eSafety systems than men.

The research by the **eSafetyAware!** campaign found that while safety scored highly as a priority – women are involved in seven out of 10 car purchase decisions – their safety system knowledge was low. The levels ranged from 56% for Speed Alert systems down to 35% for Lane Support systems. Women consistently scored lower than men in awareness of the existence of such devices, as much as 50% for some systems.

That seems an immense shame to me. All that great technology that's crammed into cars – or available as an option – is not fully understood by the driver, particularly if the driver is female.

I asked my wife Alison, and **Business Car Manager** co-director, whether she considered herself knowledgeable about safety systems.

"Personally I wouldn't agree with the findings, because I know about things like anti-lock ABS brakes and anti skid ASR that we have on our **Audi A6**. I've also tried Audi's side assist – which tells you when a car is in your blind spot – and that's really useful. But then we're in the business, so I suppose I should know such things.

"However, I do appreciate the safety systems on the Audi. You certainly feel very safe driving the car, and there are lots of secondary safety systems that enhance that feeling of safety. For instance, the automatic light sensing – when it starts to get dark, the headlamps come on automatically.

"I also like the sat-nav. I feel very safe with it. I'm not great with maps but having the sat-nav guide you to unknown destinations is really very reassuring, especially for a woman driving on her own.

"If you add to that the lovely drive – for a large car it doesn't feel heavy and it's easy to park – then it creates that sense of safe reassurance."

The **eSafetyAware!** campaign is trying to make a difference to understanding safety items, though. Today (September 08) there's been a demonstration of eSafety technologies in the eSafety Challenge. Racing drivers, including **BMW Sauber's** Formula 1 driver Robert Kubica, Audi's eight-time Le Mans winner Tom Kristensen and **Mercedes' German Touring Car** driver Susie Sotardt have demonstrated the technologies.

In particular, they've shown the benefits of Electronic Stability Control (ESC) – a global term for the different sorts of anti-skid technology available from car makers. Estimates suggest that throughout Europe 4000 lives could be saved and more than 100,000 injuries prevented if ESC was standard car equipment.

This is what Audi Le Mans winner Tom Kristensen said: "As an endurance driver, I know exactly how easy it is to make a mistake when you get distracted or are tired. No matter how much training you undertake there is always a risk. When you are outside of the safe confines of a motor sport circuit, the risk can be unforgiving. That is why I always make sure I am fully protected. eSafety systems react faster and more effectively than a human can to potential dangers, I make sure that my car is fitted with them."

TAGS: [safety](#), [side assist](#), [ABS brakes](#), [ESC anti-skid](#)

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