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F1 : Formula 1 drivers guests of FIA eSafety Challenge 2009

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Formula One drivers Giancarlo Fisichella, Heikki Kovalainen, Robert Kubica and Timo Glock joined forces with Le Mans winner Tom Kristensen and DTM racer Susie Stoddart to demonstrate five different eSafety technologies.

Some of the world's best drivers gathered to take part in the eSafety Challenge, an annual event that promotes and highlights the life saving potential of eSafety technologies.

The eSafety Challenge is supported jointly by the FIA Foundation, the European Commission, and EuroNCAP.

The event was hosted by Italian automobile club ACI and is part of the eSafety Aware campaign, a non profit 36 member association.

Formula One stars Heikki Kovalainen, Robert Kubica, Timo Glock, and Giancarlo Fisichella joined forces with Tom Kristensen, eight time 24 Hour Le Mans winner and Susie Stoddart from the German Touring Car series, to demonstrate five different eSafety technologies.

The event was also addressed by Make Roads Safe global ambassador Michelle Yeoh.

Along with Michelle Yeoh, a number of distinguished guests opened the event, including Jean Todt, President of eSafetyAware, Paul Clark MP, UK Minister for Transport and Michael Schumacher, seven time Formula One World Champion.



Jean Todt, President of eSafetyAware:
 "Today's eSafety Challenge shows that eSafety has the backing of policy makers, major automotive stakeholders, and some of the best drivers in the world. Just as with a seat belt today, one day it will be unthinkable to buy a car without eSafety on board. Our goal is to save lives by speeding up the process of getting these systems into the market as soon as possible."

Each of the demonstrated systems has the potential to save lives by addressing the root cause of some of the most common accidents, and could lead to major reductions in road deaths and casualties. Estimates for Electronic Stability Control (ESC) alone show that in Europe it could save 4,000 lives and prevent more than 100,000 injuries if fitted to every car.

Prior to the launch of the Challenge, eSafetyAware released research on the take up of eSafety technologies. The study highlighted a critical lack of awareness amongst the general population and showing that despite being involved in seven out of 10 car purchase decisions and placing safety as their number priority when buying a car, women are 30 per cent less likely to know about the existence of eSafety systems than men.

Michelle Yeoh, Make Roads Safe global ambassador:
 "Most women consider safety to be their number one priority when buying a car whether it be for themselves or their family. Thousands of lives could be saved if women were better informed and understood the benefits of eSafety technologies when buying a car. Style, price and safety needn't be compromised for the other. Nowadays the necessary safety systems are available also in small and trendy cars."

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V V Encouragingly eSafetyAware s study showed that if consumers were made aware of the technologies, they were willing to pay to have them fitted, and the overall fittings could potentially double.

Michael Schumacher:
 "I am proud to be associated with this campaign. I am convinced that these technologies are critical in our collective bid to improve road safety. We must continue to raise awareness of their benefits in order to achieve our goal of reducing the numbers of people killed on the roads."

During the course of the event, each of the star drivers took it in turn to demonstrate an eSafety technology, showcasing ESC, which stabilises the car in a skid, lane support systems, which adjusts steering if the car drifts out of its lane, speed alert, which warns the driver if he or she is speeding, blind spot monitoring, which warns the driver if a vehicle is in his blind spot, and finally, warning and emergency braking systems, which act to slow the car automatically in the case of an impending impact.



Robert Kubica:
 "In motor sport when something goes wrong there are numerous layers of safety to protect you. On the road there are no such layers of safety. If you make a mistake, eSafety systems are needed and indeed critical in order to prevent an accident. It is definitely good to have eSafety on board."

Heikki Kovalainen:
 "eSafety technologies save lives. When driving on public roads I demand absolute safety for me and my family. Despite my experience, I too can still be surprised or caught off guard when driving. It is the unexpected that is the most dangerous, and it can happen to anyone. eSafety is there to help me rectify such situations safely and hopefully avoid an accident."

Timo Glock:
 "As racing drivers in the public limelight, I believe we have a responsibility to support these sorts of campaigns. It is important for people to know about these technologies, to know how important they can be in saving lives and I must admit even I've learnt some new things about safety today."



Giancarlo Fisichella:
 "Even as an experienced racing driver, it is easy to make a mistake whilst driving. Nothing is more important than my safety and the lives of my family. When I drive a car I want to know that the latest safety features are installed so if I do make a mistake we are protected."

Tom Kristensen:
 "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."

Susie Stoddart:
 "As a racing driver I've always known that I probably knew more than the average driver about cars, but I've really been surprised to learn how poor every day driver's awareness of eSafety is and unfortunately lady drivers are no exception. It is especially shocking when you consider how concerned we are about safety. We must act to ensure that these technologies become common knowledge for women and men alike so that they can make informed and safe choices when they buy their car."

The eSafety Challenge focuses on innovative vehicle safety technologies and the potential lives to be saved on the roads through increased deployment of the set technologies. An important obstacle for deployment is the lack of awareness among both policymakers and end users, which is affecting policy support, user expectations and readiness for change. It has been proposed that the Challenge will take place in the UK in 2010.

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