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Safety & Comfort

Electronic Co-Pilots Can Save Lives

Continental driver assistance systems for inner-city driving receive top marks

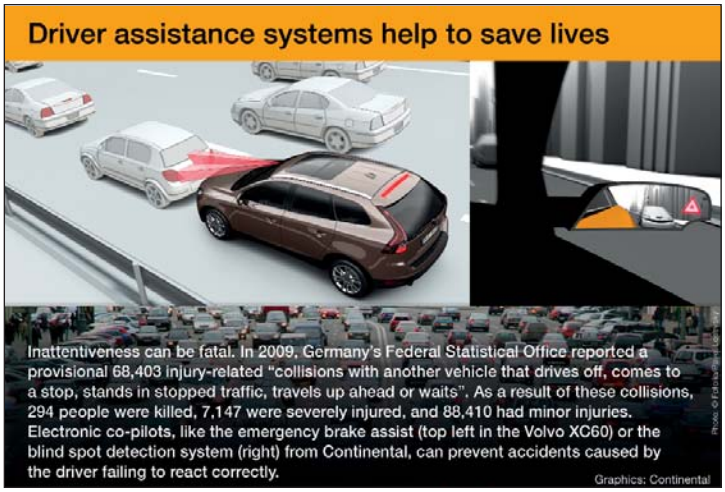
Hanover, August 2010 – One in three registered inner-city accidents happens at a speed of less than 30 kilometers per hour. Road crash data collected by the GIDAS (German In-Depth Accident Study) shows that in Germany approximately 30% of the drivers in rear-end collisions involving injuries did not use their brakes prior to the collision, and that almost every second driver failed to use full braking power. Continental has developed an emergency brake assist system that automatically triggers full emergency braking immediately before a collision takes place if the driver fails to react.

Emergency brake assist systems can prevent about 18% of all injury related accidents according to the German Insurers' Accident Research (UDV). UDV director Siegfried Brockmann explains that "emergency brake assist systems follow directly behind ESC, or electronic stability control, as the top two driver assistance systems with the greatest potential. According to our calculations, if every vehicle was to be fitted with such a system – even without the pedestrian detection function – this would still prevent two percent of the fatalities, eight percent of the severely injured victims, and 31 percent of those with minor injuries. This potential becomes much greater in interaction with reliable pedestrian and vehicle standstill detection."

Emergency brake assist helps in other inner-city driving situations as well. Volvo's "City Safety" system, which is fitted in the Volvo XC60 and based on a distance sensor made by Continental, was rated with a "good" overall score by ADAC, the German Automobile Association. Some car insurers meanwhile reward their customers by granting cheaper premiums for such driver assistance systems.

Another electronic helper in the city is the cornering light, which is active when driving with dipped headlamps at speeds below 70 kilometers per hour. The cornering light illuminates an area slanting outwards from the front of the car, allowing better recognition of a pedestrian or road bollard. Another life-saving helper is blind spot detection, a system that is installed in the Volvo XC60, among others. It monitors the rear quarter blind spot via a camera or radar, and makes the driver aware of hazardous lane-changing maneuvers, even in the city.

Dr. Ralf Cramer, member of Continental AG's Executive Board responsible for the Chassis & Safety division points out: "Driver assistance systems are one of the key technologies when it comes to enhanced driving safety. Continental would like all people to have access to safe and intelligent mobility in all vehicles. Safety is not negotiable – here, we're talking about saving people's lives."



Inattentiveness can be fatal. In 2009, Germany's Federal Statistical Office reported a provisional 68,403 injury-related "collisions with another vehicle that drives off, comes to a stop, stands in stopped traffic, travels up ahead or waits". As a result of these collisions, 294 people were killed, 7,147 were severely injured, and 88,410 had minor injuries. Electronic co-pilots, like the emergency brake assist (top left in the Volvo XC60) or the blind spot detection system (right) from Continental, can prevent accidents caused by the driver failing to react correctly.

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