

NEWS RELEASE

3rd September 2010

‘ONUS STILL ON THE DRIVER, DESPITE TECHNOLOGY’, COMMENTS ARVAL

Driver safety technologies such as ABS brakes, parking sensors and airbags are common on new vehicles and have a positive impact on accident reduction. Despite these aids, the importance of adopting good driving habits should not be underestimated according to Tracey Scarr, fleet and road safety manager at Arval.

Recent research by Arval has identified that use of technology aids such as parking sensors has led to a 25% reduction in reported incidents across the Arval fleet in the last two years. Nonetheless, Tracey warns that drivers could be lulled into a false sense of security when it comes to safe driving practice if they become too reliant on technology.

She comments: “We welcome the continuing development of safety-driven vehicle technologies to assist drivers. From seat-belts through to crumple zones, airbags and now advanced driver assistance systems, the benefits are proven. However, technology is just one side of the coin and the driver must not get lazy, relying upon such assistance alone to keep him/her safe and accident free. It is imperative that good driving skills and habits continue to be promoted and encouraged and instances of bad driving highlighted and corrected.”

In an area such as the reversing of vehicles, much can still to be done despite popular technology aids such as sensors that help the driver. According to a report from the University of Huddersfield, some 64 deaths occur each year in the UK as a direct result of reversing of vehicles. In the case of Electronic Stability Control (ESC), a safety technology that Arval made mandatory on all company cars in 2008, it is reported that this technology could reduce skidding accidents by up to 80%. At least 40% of fatal accidents are as a result of skidding, and Tracey is urging fleet decision makers to also make ESC a standard requirement for their fleet.

Tracey continues: “Vehicle safety technology has impacted overall accident numbers and our research corroborates this when it comes to the use of parking sensors for instance. However, even with technology, accidents can still happen as a result of driver error and ongoing education to promote good driver skills remains essential.

“An action such as reverse parking is a case in point where drivers still need to take care to understand and appreciate the skills involved in such a manoeuvre. It is an excellent skill to attain for convenient and safe parking, but sadly the repeated incidents of minor bumps and

collisions reported by fleets and insurance companies testify that it is still causing problems - despite parking sensors and other aids.”

She concludes: “A focus on driver education and skill enhancement, supported by safety technologies, should continue to pave the way to ongoing reductions in incident numbers ranging from small problems to major accidents. Good driver habits and vehicle safety devices need to co-exist and technology should not become the dominant force at the expense of safe and appropriate driver behaviour.”

Arval recently became the first company to receive a European eSafety prize for fleet management in recognition of the work it has done to introduce life-saving technology to both its customers and its own fleet.

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