

## Media release

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Wildhaus, June 28, 2012

### Crash tests 2012

## Caution, roadwork ahead! When lanes get narrow, you need to take extra care.

**Freeways are the best and safest roads – with one exception: At sections around roadworks, they are even more dangerous than country roads or city streets. Narrow lanes, unfamiliar and confusing routing, not to mention distractions and mistakes by drivers, cause especially high accident rates at roadworks on freeways. At the crash tests taking place in Wildhaus in Switzerland, DEKRA and AXA will demonstrate the risks that lurk at roadworks for drivers and passengers as well as for construction workers. They also call for specific preventive measures.**

Almost half (46 percent) of the 1,700 respondents in a survey by DEKRA in 2009 indicated that they feel unsafe when driving past roadworks on freeways. In fact, one in six drivers (17 percent) experiences real fear, which may be very well founded when one considers the accident statistics: Approximately 7 percent of all accidents on freeways in Switzerland and Germany happen on or near roadworks.

### Driving past roadworks requires full concentration

The most frequent causes of accidents on freeways are drivers failing to concentrate, being too close to the vehicle in front, going too fast, driving while intoxicated, and failing to pay attention when changing lanes. "Narrow lanes are unforgiving for any driver who gets distracted. Therefore: no daydreaming, no fiddling with the radio – and texting on your mobile is absolutely verboten", says **Bettina Zahnd**, Head of Accident Research and Prevention at AXA Winterthur. "Many people forget that when driving at 80 kph, every second of inattention means driving blind for 22 meters." The accident researchers at AXA and DEKRA therefore urge drivers to concentrate fully, to choose the lane early, and to refrain from passing others or changing lanes, which sometimes are only 2.5 meters wide. When in the narrow left-hand lane, drivers should drive in the space between cars in the right-hand lane and at the same speed, and refrain from passing.

### **Effective measures to protect road users and construction workers**

To further reduce the many accidents that happen because of inattentiveness, **Bettina Zahnd** also believes that the consistent use of rumble strips is necessary. "In Germany we have seen that rumble strips installed there where lanes end work well in warning and getting the attention of distracted drivers. It therefore makes sense to use them more widely for roadworks in Switzerland as well." The crash tests that DEKRA and AXA will conduct also highlight the importance of using crash cushions around sign panels in places where lanes narrow. **Jörg Ahlgrimm**, Head of Accident Research at DEKRA, believes that "using crash cushions around sign panels can save lives. In Switzerland they are already widely used at the entrances to roadworks, but you will rarely see them in Germany. We need to change this in order to help protect inattentive road users and construction workers."

### **Regular checks of dangerous sites**

The crash tests also highlight the special risks that drivers face when changing lanes, when traffic is rerouted to the opposite lane, and when approaching fixed or temporary roadworks. **Jörg Ahlgrimm** explains that "construction companies contribute decisively to road safety when they separate lanes by using mobile guidance systems and by regularly checking, and replacing if necessary, any temporary lane markings."

### **Overview of crucial measures that accident researchers are asking for**

#### **Improvements in infrastructure:**

- Consistent use of rumble strips there where lanes ends and before other obstructions
- Signal panels that are secured with crash cushions
- Temporary lane markings that are checked regularly and replaced if damaged

#### **Conduct by drivers:**

- Drive in the space between cars in the other lane and at the same speed when passing roadworks
- Do not pass other cars or change lanes when passing through roadworks
- Choose your lane early when traffic is moving; in traffic jams, pull up close to the car in front and apply the "zipper" principle

**View photos, videos and statistics on the latest crash tests online at:**

[www.accidentresearch.ch](http://www.accidentresearch.ch)  
[www.dekra.de/wildhaus](http://www.dekra.de/wildhaus)  
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**Additional information**

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