

Media release

Wildhaus, June 27, 2013

Crash tests 2013

Mobile and safe? Driving is a risk at any age.

What should a driver training program for new drivers include? Are health check-ups for elderly drivers necessary? In the crash tests to be conducted in Wildhaus in Switzerland, the accident analysts of DEKRA and AXA will demonstrate the problems of young and elderly drivers and examine the possibilities that exist in the area of prevention. While accidents caused by young speedsters often gain a great deal of public attention, statistics indicate that risk from the driving behavior of elderly drivers is also very high.

In Germany, the number of accidents caused by senior citizens is rising. According to Germany's Federal Statistical Office, drivers over the age of 75 who are involved in accidents will have caused the accident in 76% of cases. This is above the level for new drivers aged 18 to 20, who are considered a high-risk category (71%). A similar picture emerges from statistics in Switzerland. Drivers over the age of 70 who are involved in an accident will have contributed to causing it in 77% of cases; the same figure for young drivers aged 18 to 19 is 75%.

Developing long-term solutions for elderly drivers in Germany

«Individual mobility is a basic need and directly affects the quality of a person's life, also in old age. It is therefore especially important to find ways to maintain people's ability to drive – without compromising general road safety», explains Jörg Ahlgrimm, Head of Accident Research at DEKRA. «The fact is that the number of drivers over the age of 75 who are involved in accidents is rising rapidly. So there is a need to take action, especially when you consider that a growing proportion of the population will reach this age. As far as road safety is concerned, politicians and society need to keep an eye on current preventive measures and develop them further if necessary.»

Independent health check-ups for elderly drivers in Switzerland make sense

Health check-ups to ensure fitness for the road are voluntary in Germany, while drivers in Switzerland must have their general practitioner examine them every two years after they reach the age of 70. AXA's accident researchers believe that these regulations for Switzerland are insufficient. According to **Bettina Zahnd**, head of Accident Research and Prevention at AXA Winterthur: «General practitioners should not put a strain on their relationship with their patients on account of potentially negative test results. We therefore recommend that medical tests be conducted independently.»



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Young cars for young drivers

With young drivers, unlike senior citizens, it is a lack of experience and an increased willingness to take risks that play a large part in the causes of accidents. Accident statistics show that, in an above-average number of cases, accidents are caused by excessive speed, alcohol, drugs or tiredness. Consequently, it is young drivers who are the most frequent causers of self-inflicted accidents and accidents involving only one vehicle. «In too many cases, the outcome is a tragic fatal accident», says **Bettina Zahnd**. «We therefore urgently recommend that young drivers stay away from alcohol and drugs and out of the cars of exuberant friends who egg each other on to perform risky maneuvers on the road.» With respect to the car itself, she believes that «a modern car with the latest driver-safety systems is more suitable than an older one, because features such as ABS and ESP will kick in to correct driving errors and can therefore help to prevent accidents. Airbags, reinforced passenger cells and seatbelt tensioners can save lives if an accident should nevertheless occur.»

Effective prevention measures in Germany and Switzerland

In Switzerland and Germany, the authorities have introduced the first successful measures for young drivers:

Germany	Switzerland
Accompanied driving from age 17 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- A driver can take the driving test at age 17- Until age 18, he or she can drive only if accompanied by a suitable person	Training in two phases <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Young drivers can get their provisional license after completing basic training in practical driving and theory- The authorities then grant a full license after three years of driving without incidents and on completion of a training course.

Current studies conducted in Germany show that the risk of young drivers who make use of this program is less than that of drivers who do not gain experience in road traffic under the supervision of an accompanying person. **Bettina Zahnd** therefore asks that «accompanied driving from the age of 17, as concept for safe driving by young drivers, should be considered for Switzerland too.»

Jörg Ahlgrimm adds that «in Switzerland the two-phase training program has established itself as a good form of training for new drivers. We need to find out if this type of training could reduce the number of accidents among young drivers in Germany.»

Overview of the key measures and recommendations from accident researchers

Elderly drivers:

- **For Germany:** The public and private sectors must continue to look into the type and scope of preventive measures and develop solutions that are socially acceptable.
- **For Switzerland:** Check-ups to determine fitness for the road should be conducted by an independent doctor (not the driver's own general practitioner). In this way the relationship between doctor and patient will not be put under strain in the event of a negative outcome.
- **General:**
 - Pay attention to mental and physical fitness.
 - Take advantage of regular vision and health check-ups to find out whether a driver is still fit for the road.
 - Note the effects of medication on the ability to drive; never drink alcohol if you intend to drive.
 - Use a vehicle that is right for the driver's age, offers unobstructed all-around vision, and has adequate safety systems.

Young drivers:

- **For Germany:** Study the two-phase driver training program based on the Swiss model.
- **For Switzerland:** Introduce accompanied driving from age 17.
- **General:**
 - Never drink alcohol or take drugs if you intend to drive. If in doubt, take a taxi or use public transportation.
 - Don't be tempted to perform risky driving maneuvers, even when egged on by exuberant friends.
 - Don't become distracted by your mobile phone.
 - The following rule applies: young (modern) cars for young drivers. Ask for high-quality safety features when buying a car.

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Additional information

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

www.accidentresearch.ch

www.dekra.de/wildhaus

www.axa.de/crashtests

www.crashtests-wildhaus.net

Further information

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AXA Winterthur

AXA Winterthur, which belongs to AXA Group, is the leading all-line insurer in Switzerland. It offers its clients financial protection through a broad range of personal, property and liability products, customized life insurance and pension offers, as well as bank products in cooperation with bank partners. AXA Winterthur has approximately 4,000 employees. Its sales network consists of over 288 independent general agencies and agents, with approximately 2,700 employees working exclusively for AXA Winterthur. In 2012, AXA Winterthur, which is a partner of the Swiss Climate Foundation, reported total revenues of CHF 11.4 billion.

DEKRA

DEKRA is one of the world's leading expert organizations. The company is currently active in more than 50 countries. Over 28,000 employees are committed to ensuring long-term safety, quality and environmental protection. DEKRA SE is a full subsidiary of DEKRA e.V. and manages the operations of the group. The DEKRA "Automotive", "Industrial" and "Personnel" business units provide professional and innovative services in the fields of vehicle inspection, expert appraisal, international claims management, consulting, industrial testing, product testing, certification, environmental protection, qualification, and temporary work. In 2012 DEKRA generated sales of almost 2.2 billion euros.



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