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UK shuns Ecall life-saver

EC scheme enables cars to report their own crashes, with location

By [Clive Akass](#)

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THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION is trying to persuade Britain to enforce a system that would save an estimated 2,500 lives each year across the continent by enabling cars to report their own crashes.

The Ecall system, as it is called, is an extension of the e112 scheme, which automatically provides location information when an emergency call is made using 999 in the UK, or 112 anywhere in Europe.

In an Ecall-equipped vehicle, an emergency call with location information would be triggered automatically by the same sensors that cause protective airbags to explode in a crash.

Research shows that some six in ten mobile emergency callers cannot say where they are, and of course people involved in car crashes may not be able to make a call at all.

All new phones are supposed to support e112, which also requires the cooperation of operators, who may have to provide location information by cellular triangulation if a handset does not support GPS.

New cars were supposed to support Ecall from this year under an EC plan, but the UK has refused to make it mandatory for vehicles sold in Britain, though emergency services here can respond to Ecalls from cars fitted with the system and use the location information provided.

The Department for Transport said in a statement said that an independent review in 2006 indicated that the benefits of the system would not justify the cost of implementing it in the UK, which had "some of the safest roads in the world."

The statement said, "Road safety is still one of the Department's highest priorities. We believe that [technology](#) has an important role to play in this, which is why we have supported moves to increase awareness of vehicle safety systems such as electronic stability control across the EU. However, it is important that each initiative is carefully considered on its merits."

It went on, "We are currently discussing eCall with key UK stakeholders and undertaking a review of the latest developments, and continue to discuss our concerns with the European Commission."

The support [infrastructure](#) needed by Ecall is already in place, so the costs involved

would appear to be that of fitting the system to cars, and the cost of GPS has dropped considerably since 1996 when the DfT assessment was made.

An EC spokeswoman said discussions were continuing with the DfT. "We are trying to provide additional data that would help [the Ecall] case," she said. μ

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