

Press Release

Don't wait too long to replace worn windshield wipers

Good care, good visibility – for safety

- ▶ Defective wipers are a safety risk
- ▶ Poor visibility, especially when looking into oncoming lights
- ▶ If streaks appear, replace the wiper blades

The drivers of the first cars had to stop or open the roof to clear the windshield in rainy weather. Today, this job is done by high-tech windshield wiper systems, often supported by interval switching and rain sensors. However, they only guarantee good visibility if the wiper blades are maintained and replaced in time. Spring is a good time to check the wipers.

“Good visibility is one of the most important things when it comes to road safety”, says Stefanie Ritter, accident researcher at DEKRA. “Worn windshield wipers cannot guarantee this. Driving in the rain can then easily turn into flying blind.” Worn wipers leave fine smears on the windshield, which can obscure the driver's view when it really matters: in rain, fog, or snowfall. Even fine dirt, such as dust or insect residue, can no longer simply be wiped away with worn rubber lips.

Glare effects from oncoming lights

Particularly at dusk and in the dark, glare can severely restrict visibility. As soon as the headlights of oncoming traffic hit streaks or dirt on the windshield, a lot of scattered light is created. “Worn wiper blades can therefore become a safety risk you shouldn't be taking”, recommends the DEKRA expert. “It's worth keeping an eye on the wiper blades. Give them a clean from time to time and maybe treat them to some care product.” A damp cloth is often sufficient for this, but glass cleaner or warm water with a splash of washing-up liquid are good for heavier soiling.

Today, high-quality wiper blades are designed for more than 750,000 wiper cycles. This means they wipe an area the size of around 60 football pitches. They can withstand a temperature range of -30°C to +80°C as well as direct UV radiation from the sun. Nevertheless, they should be spared unnecessary stress, otherwise their durability will

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suffer. Windshield wipers were developed to get to grips with water, fine particles, and insect residue – coarse dirt, leaves or ice are better removed by hand.

“Wiper blades are often damaged when you tear at the frozen blades after a frosty night. It is better to loosen them by defrosting the windshield”, recommends Ritter. If you park outside on a frosty night, it is better to put the wipers up in the evening to prevent them from freezing. Wiping over slabs of ice or too much snow also does the rubber lips and the wiper motor no favors.

But even with the best care, the wipers are still wearing parts that will have to be replaced sooner or later. Replacement is imminent when they start to squeak or rattle and is due at the latest when they leave streaks and no longer wipe parts of the windshield properly.

First patent in 1903

The first patent for a windshield wiper was filed by American Mary Anderson in 1903. After solutions that were moved by hand or worked with negative pressure, Bosch presented the first electrically driven wiper system in 1926. A second wiper for the passenger side was also possible. The windshield washer was added in 1959, and the overlapping of the two wiper blades made the field of vision larger.

After that, intermittent wipers, rear window wipers and rain sensors provided even more comfort and safety. In the 1990s, the wiper blades were further developed for temperature resistance and smooth running by combining two different types of rubber. Then came the curved wiper blade, which adapts to the curvature of the windshield and thus ensures even contact pressure and good wiping quality.

“Today's windshield wipers are high-tech components that do everything they can to ensure good visibility”, says the DEKRA accident researcher. “But they do so only until they are worn out, and then it's time for a change.”

About DEKRA

DEKRA was originally founded in 1925 to ensure road safety through vehicle inspection. With a much wider scope today, DEKRA is the world's largest independent non-listed expert organization in the testing, inspection, and certification sector. As a global provider of comprehensive services and solutions, we help our customers improve their safety, security, and sustainability outcomes. In 2022, DEKRA generated sales totaling nearly EUR 3.8 billion. The company currently employs almost 50,000 people who offer qualified and independent expert services in approximately 60 countries on five continents. With a platinum rating from EcoVadis, DEKRA is now in the top one percent of sustainable businesses ranked.