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“The summer break is over and a new school year is about to begin“ is one of the most important pieces of information for road users at the moment. It means that hundreds of thousands of young children will be embarking on their first day of school. Many of them, but also children already at school, will be making their way there on their own for the first time. As a result, all road users will have to be particularly considerate and attentive around this time, and in particular if out and about near schools, nursery schools, sports fields, and bus stops.

Used car purchase: No test drive, no contract

DEKRA used car experts advise readers that “the test drive is one of the most important parts of purchasing a used car. You shouldn’t put your signature to any contract without it. And don’t just check the car curb side, but also put it through its paces on the road. However important it is to check the vehicle on the hydraulic lift, some abnormalities can only be detected during driving,” says Ronald Hufnagel.

E-bike battery: Avoid hard impacts

DEKRA expert Jochen Hof reminds readers that “e-bike batteries are high-tech products, storing up to 40 or 50 times more energy than a smartphone battery. People should bear this in mind when using these power packs and consequently treat them with the appropriate care. It is essential to avoid hard impacts and make sure that the e-bike doesn’t topple over, and never drop the battery.”

Other topics:

E-scooters: Accidents rise sharply

Highway: Hard shoulder is reserved for emergencies

Cycles transported on the rear carrier: Double check

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Careful, first day at school! Watch out for children at the roadside

Safely to school and back

Role swap on the way to school

“The summer break is over and a new school year is about to begin” is one of the most important pieces of information for road users at the moment. It means that hundreds of thousands of young children will be embarking on their first day of school. Many of them, but also children already at school, will be making their way there on their own for the first time. “Other road users can be a big help getting the kids to and from school safely,” says DEKRA accident researcher Andreas Schäuble. “In the period following the start of a new academic year all road users will have to be particularly considerate and attentive, and in particular if out and about near schools, nursery schools, sports fields, and bus stops.”

“Unlike adults, children have a severely limited field of vision. This means they can't see danger out of the corner of their eye,” says the accident expert. Motorists should be aware of a small child's capabilities. “Children are still very self-centered. For example, when vehicles approach, they assume, “I see the car, so it sees me.”

In addition, young children are very focused on one thing and may not notice an approaching vehicle, or may not notice it until it is too late if they are distracted. On account of their height, they can also often fail to have the required situational awareness in traffic situations. Even a normal-sized car will obstruct their view. In turn, motorists find it very difficult to detect children, either at the side or behind their vehicle. Motorists should pay especial attention to these points in places regularly frequented by children and drive carefully.

Schäuble reminds parents that they should practice the route to school with their children, if possible during normal school hours, and not just when traffic is light, on weekends or holidays. He suggests that adults also practice the route by swapping roles, i.e., that the children take the parents to school, the parents having the children explain where danger lurks and what they need to watch out for along the way.

For many more tips and additional information, visit www.dekra.de/de/kinderkappen/, where you will find interesting flyers and educational films for children on topics such as walking to school, riding the bus, and crossing the street.

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E-bike battery: Avoid hard impacts

Proper use of e-bike batteries

Do not continue to use batteries that are damaged.

E-bike batteries are high-tech products, storing up to 40 or 50 times more energy than a smartphone battery. "People should bear this in mind when using these power packs and as such treat them with the appropriate care. It is essential to avoid hard impacts and make sure that the e-bike doesn't topple over and never drop the battery," reminds DEKRA expert Jochen Hof. "Avoid strong impacts, make sure the pedelec does not fall over and never drop the battery. Also, do not leave the battery in the blazing sun or in a hot car for hours on end. This can damage the device and shorten its life," warns the expert.

Batteries have a high safety standard, are subjected to many tests and are equipped with protection against overcharging and short circuits, but it is still wise to handle them with care. For example, an energy storage unit with a capacity of 500 watt-hours (Wh) is made up of about 40 to 60 individual battery cells, each separated from the others by only a thin layer. If a battery accidentally falls to the ground, it may damage the interface and cause a short circuit. This can cause a chain reaction that may result in a fire or, in the worst case, an explosion of the battery.

Jochen Hof emphasizes that the user should "under no circumstances continue to use damaged batteries. Extreme caution is advised if the user notices any external damage, bulges, leaking electrolyte, or residue on the terminals. Do not touch with bare hands and do not open, but find a safe place outside and cover with sand if possible. It should be returned immediately to the dealer or disposed of at the recycling center.

Care is also called for when re-charging. On account of the high energy density, it is best not to recharge the battery in living areas, but in the cellar or cycle shed, preferably on a stone floor with ample distance maintained to combustible material. It is also important to observe the operating instructions, only employ a charging device recommended by the battery manufacturer and optimally in the temperature range of 10-20°C. In most cases the electronics housed in modern batteries prevents charging if the battery temperature is zero or over 40°C.

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Car purchase: Test drive is an absolute must

Play it safe when buying a used car

No test drive, no contract

DEKRA used car experts advise readers: "The test drive is one of the most important parts of buying a used car. You shouldn't sign a contract without one. Take the time not only to check the car at the curb, but also to put it through its paces on the road. And as important as it is to inspect the car on the hydraulic lift, some noticeable problems can only be detected while driving," says Ronald Hufnagel of DEKRA.

Choosing a test drive on a route you know well makes it easier to compare and evaluate the vehicle's behavior with your previous model. It is also a good idea to bring along a friend or acquaintance who knows something about cars, because two sets of eyes and ears see and hear better than one. A passenger can also note any anomalies that may need to be clarified later, and will also make it easier to compare with other candidate vehicles. "Concentrate on the vehicle, turn off the audio system and drive as you normally would," says the used car expert.

It is also a good idea to drive to an appropriately quiet location, such as a parking lot or work yard, to perform specific tests. For example, you can test whether the vehicle holds its line and doesn't drift when you briefly take your hands off the wheel. Other essential tests include a hard turn of the steering wheel to see if the vehicle can be steered smoothly around corners and how responsive the steering is at all. Also check that the car responds smoothly when you accelerate, that there is no judder and that there is not too much play in the steering wheel..

If the traffic situation allows, it is also recommended to carry out a hard stop, to test whether the brakes work evenly and do their job effectively. This point can be assessed even more precisely on the brake tester, for example as part of a general inspection, which is recommended in any case when buying a used car. Also listen out for any rattling or chaffing noises during the test drive. If you can't trust yourself to make a valid judgement of a test drive, you can also contact a neutral expert, perhaps as part of a DEKRA technical check for used cars.

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E-scooters: Consideration for pedestrians required

Accidents with e-scooters increase sharply

Alcohol + e-scooter = loss of car licence

Introduced about four years ago to much early praise, e-scooters have become a common sight in many cities. Studies show that they have the potential to replace many of the nearly 30 million car trips of less than two kilometers. Aside from the undeniable fun factor, they could have a real impact on reducing traffic for that all-important "last mile". However, we now have the first reliable accident statistics for these two-wheelers, and the electric scooter does not necessarily cut a good figure.

According to figures issued by the Federal Statistics Office there was a jump of 8,260 e-scooter accidents involving personal injury in 2022. This translates as a 49 per cent increase in comparison to 2021, when 5,535 accidents were recorded. This figure includes eleven fatalities compared to five the year before. 1,234 people were seriously injured in 2022, and 7,651 suffered minor injury. These figures do not take into account accidents traceable to negligently parked e-scooters.

The most common cause of accidents recorded by the police was improper use of roads or pavements (18.6 percent). "Many e-scooter users are apparently unaware that e-scooters cannot be used on sidewalks, but must be used on cycle paths and bike lanes," says DEKRA accident researcher Luigi Ancona. If neither is available, the user has to move to the road or the shoulder.

Pedestrian zones may only be used if specifically allowed. "In this case, great care must be taken of pedestrians, and this includes speed." Here, too, there are still lessons to be learnt – inappropriate speed was a cause in 7.2 percent of e-scooter accidents.

Many accidents can also be traced back to the influence of alcohol (18.0 percent). DEKRA experts remind readers that the use of an e-scooter whilst under the influence of alcohol risks some hefty fines and may even entail the loss of the user's driving licence. "The successful integration of this new mode of transport requires e-scooter riders to be considerate of other road users and this particularly applies to pedestrians," emphasizes the accident researcher. DEKRA Info



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Motorway: Hard shoulder reserved for emergencies

Clear rules apply to the hard shoulder on motorways, remind the DEKRA experts. They may only be used in events such as a breakdown, an accident or on the instructions of the police. Exceptions to this rule are cases where the hard shoulder is explicitly released for traffic by appropriate signs. Hard shoulders are not intended to be used to obtain information about the route or to clean up a spilled drink. When stopped on the hard shoulder, a multi-lane vehicle, including that of a helper, must be immediately secured with a warning triangle and active hazard lights, or the individual will be liable in the event of a rear-end collision. Before leaving the vehicle, put on a high-visibility vest and anticipate a high risk from moving traffic. Passengers should not remain in the vehicle, but should exit to the side of the road and wait behind the guardrail. DEKRA Info

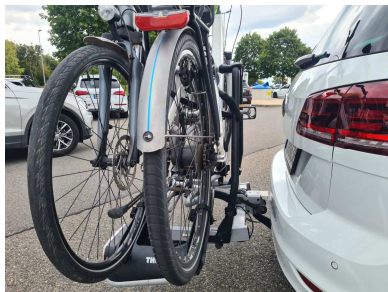


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Bikes on the rear rack: double check

Many motorists transport their bicycles and Pedelecs on a bike rack mounted on a tow bar. To make sure there are no breakdowns during the trip, the experts at DEKRA recommend a double fastening check before setting off. In addition to the secure fastening of the two-wheeler to the carrier, it is important to ensure that the trailer coupling is attached to the vehicle in accordance with the regulations. The tow bar must fit snugly in the bracket, even when shaken vigorously. If the ball bar is not properly locked, there is a risk of accident. The trailer socket and electrical connection to the carrier must also be intact for the turn signals, tail lights and brake lights to work. This is especially important when using adapters or cable extensions. DEKRA recommends following the instructions in the owner's manuals for the towbar and carrier. DEKRA Info