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Contents:

Promoting health: Business cooperates with gyms.

An increasing number of companies are sending their staff to gyms. The DEKRA Health and Safety Report 2023 discovered that around 31 percent of companies are now offering such perks as part of company measures to promote health. Office workers in large companies are generally more likely to benefit from such health measures.

Heightened accident risk for pedestrians: Out and about? Stand out!

Fog, rain, nighttime – DEKRA accident researchers advise anybody wanting to reach their goal safely in the fall and winter to ensure they are clearly visible. As the days grow shorter and many journeys are made at dusk or at night, the risk of being overlooked increases, especially for pedestrians.

Responsible driving: “Assistance systems are not autopilots”

“If motorists want to fully exploit the safety potential of their vehicle they must know not only how to correctly operate the installed driver assistance systems, but also to be aware of their limitations,” says DEKRA accident researcher Luigi Ancona. “The systems make driving more comfortable and above all safer – provided that the driver can use them correctly.”

Other topics:

Treading a safe path: Winter tires

Watch out in the fall: Beware of patches of black ice

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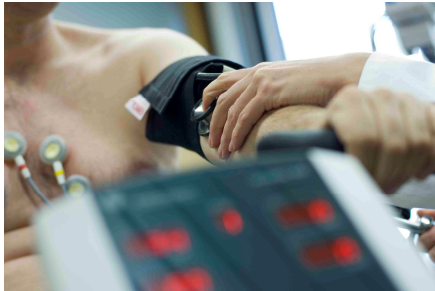


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Health promotion is the trend: A higher level of motivation

From the office to the gym

Healthy, satisfied, motivated

More and more companies are sending their employees to gyms. The DEKRA Health and Safety Report 2023 discovered that about 31 percent of companies are now offering such perks as part of company measures to promote health. The measures also include changing workplace design to improve efficiency (40%), medical check-ups (37%) and counseling in crisis situations (32%).

A survey conducted by forsa on behalf of DEKRA revealed: 68 per cent of employees said that their employer offered health promotion measures. In general, office workers and those working in large companies are more likely to be offered such health measures than those working in commerce, field sales and small enterprises.

"The popularity of company-sponsored health measures is no coincidence, as they can achieve several goals at the same time," says Johannes Hopp, Head of Occupational Health and Company Health Management at DEKRA. It has great potential to reduce health risks and stress, and thus increase individual quality of life."

The added value for the company lies in a healthy, satisfied and motivated workforce, as well as greater identification with the company because employees feel more valued. In addition, the shortage of skilled workers and the demographic shift to an increasingly older workforce make workplace health promotion more important than ever.

However, Hopp advises against employing the watering can principle and offering all sorts of measures without clarifying the individual requirements of the employees beforehand. "A target-group specific implementation of health measures is the sensible way to go and generally leads to higher participation rates among all employees." The most appropriate measures for different departments or groups of employees could be identified by analyzing the stress situation in the workplace. Best practice here would also integrate the employees in the decision-making process.

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Pedestrians: Reflectors in the dark increase visibility

Heightened risk of accident for pedestrians

Out and about? Stand out!

Fog, rain, night-time – DEKRA accident researchers advise anyone who wants to reach their destination safely in fall and winter to make sure they are clearly visible. As the days are beginning to draw in and many journeys are made at dusk or at night, the risk of being overlooked increases, especially for pedestrians.

“As the days become shorter, the pedestrian accident figures shoot up, as many are unaware of the dangers of poor visibility,” warns DEKRA accident researcher Andreas Schäuble. “Many people assume that if they can see the car headlights, that the driver can see them. Yet, this is a mistake that can end fatally.”

The situational awareness of motorists can be considerably restricted even in well-lit streets. It is frequently the case that a vast variety of different light sources and constant changes between light and dark cause confusion. In addition, there is the general poor sight of people at night. The upshot is that pedestrians can be easily overlooked, especially if they are wearing dark, low contrast clothing or are crossing the road at poorly lit points.

A help is anything that can be seen from a distance. Bright, contrasting clothing and reflective elements attached to clothes or bags are worth virtually half a life insurance. Bright, reflective elements on shoes are particularly effective as they stand out especially when the feet are in motion. To ensure that children starting school are safe when they are out and about, DEKRA branches are once again distributing thousands of signal red caps with reflective elements this year.

“The best places to cross the road are at traffic lights, zebra crossing or pedestrian-specific markings on the road, and don’t forget to take the direct route that quickly takes you out of the danger zone,” recommends Schäuble. In contrast, points to avoid would be any with poor visibility such as those between parked cars or with other obstacles that block sight. “Also think, as an adult, that you must set an example for children.”

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Winter tires: Good traction on winter roads

Steering a safe path through the winter with winter tires

Tread a safe path in the cold winter months

“Anybody intending to use their vehicle regularly in the winter months definitely needs to invest in some winter tires,” says DEKRA tire expert Christian Koch. “Even if climate change means that the average temperatures are tending to rise, we still need to be on our guard for extreme winter conditions, as was indeed the case last year.”

At lower temperatures the summer tires suffer from significant safety deficits. Because the rubber mix of summer tires hardens at lower temperatures, their grip worsens. This in turn means that the braking path on wet, snowy or icy roads lengthens and the grip and traction drops off and not just in bends.

Winter tires are different. Special rubber mixes specifically for cold conditions, deeper tread and their lamella structure provide good grip even when the temperatures drop considerably. This ensures not only safety in icy and snowy conditions, but also on wet or dirty fall and spring roads.

Once the winter tires have been fitted, motorists can then get into their car without any worries should wintry conditions suddenly hit the road and the localized obligation to don winter tires kicks in. Only those vehicles equipped with four winter tires are allowed out on black ice, packed snow, mush, ice, or frost. Reliable winter tires are designated by the snowflake mountain pictogram. Violations are punishable by a fine of between 60 and 120 euros and one endorsement point.

“However, winter tires can only generate their full potential when they possess sufficient tread depth,” says the tire expert. The statutorily prescribed 1.6 millimeters does not suffice for safe driving in the wet and snow. He recommends a minimum tread depth of four millimeters. And this is precisely the figure that Austrian winter tire regulations stipulate.

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Assistance systems: Operation has to be learnt

Motorists are still responsible:

“Assistance systems are not autopilots”

“If you want to exploit the safety potential of your vehicle to the full, you need to know how to use the installed driver assistance systems correctly and where their limits lie,” says Luigi Ancona, accident researcher at DEKRA. More and more modern cars have emergency braking assistance, lane departure warning, adaptive cruise control and other systems on board. “These are all systems that make driving more comfortable and, above all, safer - as long as drivers know how to use them.”

“It is important to be aware of the limitations of the technology in question,” explains Ancona. Even an active lane departure warning system cannot keep a vehicle on the road if the bend is negotiated at excessive speed or the road surface is slippery. Even the best system in the world cannot counter the laws of physics.” Even an emergency brake assist continues to require attention, active thinking and quick reactions on the part of the motorist. In dangerous situations they still need to actively and resolutely brake just as before, so to reduce speed rapidly and avoid a collision.

“For example, if a driver fails to react to an imminent collision, the system will first issue a warning, then apply gentle braking, and only apply a hard stop at the last minute if the driver fails to react to the warning,” explains the accident expert. This means that the vehicle comes to a stop much later than if the driver had recognized the danger in time and reduced speed. He therefore recommends a proactive driving style to avoid a situation where hard braking is required, especially as hard braking is always dangerous for traffic behind.

“The systems are designed to assist the driver in dangerous situations, such as when the driver is inattentive, has made a mistake, is distracted or tired,” says Ancona. However, drivers must be aware that the person behind the wheel is still responsible and cannot blindly trust the technology. “These are assistance systems, not autopilots”.

The systems available are already very good, but they are not perfect in all conditions, for example when sensors or cameras are dirty or covered in snow. “What is important for safe driving is the fine interplay between the driver and the systems installed in the

vehicle,” emphasizes the accident researcher. It is important to know how the electronic life savers work and that the driver must remain alert to be able to intervene at any time.

“If you want to drive safely, you also need to know which systems are installed in the vehicle, whether a system is active, how to detect this and how to activate and deactivate the systems,” adds Thomas Riedel, the head of the driving license center at DEKRA. This has already been a standard part of the driving test since mid-2022. Driving license candidates will have to prove that they can operate the installed assistance systems without assistance.

Experienced drivers would do well to be equipped with this knowledge when they get behind the wheel of a car equipped with assistance systems. “Anyone who uses a variety of vehicles, whether for private or professional purposes, needs to be aware that the systems are different from one manufacturer to the next. It is not just the audible signals, symbols in the cockpit and different names for systems with comparable functions that may differ, but also the functions and limitations of the systems themselves.”

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Watch out in the fall: beware of black ice

DEKRA accident experts are reminding drivers that they need to adapt their driving style to the possibility of suddenly appearing ice patches in the fall months. Even if there is usually enough grip on the road, dangerous isolated patches of ice can form at temperatures below plus four degrees. This is more common in the fall in cool wooded areas, on shady north-facing slopes, on high ground exposed to the wind or in hollows where cold air collects. Bridges also need to be watched out for, as they can easily form the dreaded bridge ice. It is often the case that cold air flows under the bridges and turns moisture into ice. “Don't let yourself be taken by surprise and drive carefully, watch your speed and keep your distance when the temperature is just above freezing,” says accident analyst Thomas Gut. This is especially true when the danger sign 113 “Snow and ice” with the snowflake symbol is displayed at the side of the road. It warns of stretches of road that are prone to black ice. Gut also recommends that drivers take seriously the warnings given by the car itself when the temperature drops to around 4 degrees.

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