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Blistering heat, long routes and a heavy load – the holiday journey really puts the tires through it. So, to prevent breakdowns due to tire failure, DEKRA's tire expert Christian Koch recommends a brief tire **safety** check before starting off: „Especially look out for tire pressure, tread depth and age of tire.” The latest results of the DEKRA tire check shows how important these points are.

Currently around 560 roadwork sites on German highways: a convergence of risks

Markus Egelhaaf is an accident researcher at DEKRA and warns readers that “roadwork sites on highways are places posing particularly dangerous problems to motorists and come with a heightened risk of accident.” The reason for this is that a multitude of risks converge, such as, for example, narrow driving lanes, high traffic volume, uneven and partially soiled driving surfaces and a sensory barrage of temporary road signs and road surface markings.

Accident researchers: Incorrect sitting posture leads to risk to life

DEKRA accident researchers warn against passengers making themselves too comfy in the front seat of a car. Biomechanics expert Andreas Schäuble points to recent crash tests and warns that “lying, sprawling or putting your feet up on the dashboard largely negates the protective effect of belt and airbag in an accident.” “To put it clearly and succinctly; front passengers lying and slumping in the car are risking their life in an accident.”

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Roadworks: Adjust speed and concentrate on the road

Currently around 560 roadwork sites on highways in Germany

A convergence of risks

Anybody driving on vacation must currently expect to encounter numerous roadwork sites on highways. According to the roadwork information system collated by the Federal Institute for Highways there were around 560 roadwork sites on the German highway network in July, some of them up to 33 kilometers in length. Every summer sees a range of construction work: road surfaces renewed, lanes added, traffic flow diverted or bridges renovated.

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Figures published by the Federal Statistics Agency show that 1,869 people were involved in accidents at roadwork sites in 2021. Of these 19 lost their lives, 242 were seriously injured and 1,608 slightly injured.

Egelhaaf says “it is therefore important before entering roadwork areas to reduce speed in good time and to concentrate on driving along the frequently narrower lane markings. It is essential that the motorist pays attention to the stipulated maximum widths indicated.” The overtaking lanes are sometimes only about 2.20 meters wide and this is a frequent source of vehicle brushing collisions. When things get tight, for example, next to a truck or bus, the motorist should desist from overtaking and drive off to the side at the same speed, or simply switch to the right-hand lane. Both hands belong on the steering wheel, also because a lane assist system cannot be trusted to interpret temporary road markings correctly and might make unwanted corrective adjustments. When traffic begins to build up, the driver should leave a sufficiently large distance to the vehicle in front in order to facilitate the passage of emergency and recovery vehicles if required.

The expert also warns against entering a roadwork site at excessive speed and attempting to overtake at the last minute before lanes converge. “This is a cause of unnecessary danger because it means that the mandatory safety distances can frequently not be observed,” says Egelhaaf. Critical points are also transitioning to the opposite side of the road. This is a common cause of rear-end accidents and the motorist brushing against other vehicles, above all if drivers are too fast or not giving the situation their full attention.

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Always check tire pressure on cold tires

Tires need to be top fit for the journey

Low pressure, high risk

Blistering heat, long routes and a heavy load – the holiday journey really puts the tires through it. So, to prevent breakdowns due to tire failures, DEKRA's tire expert Christian Koch recommends a brief tire safety check before starting off: „Above all look out for tire pressure, tread depth and age of tire.“ The results of the latest DEKRA tire check show how important these points are. The check revealed that one in 25 tires (4 percent) displayed a tire pressure that was significantly too low (more than 20 percent were in such a condition). Koch warns that “this greatly reduces the service life of the tire and makes a sudden tire failure all the more likely.” The devil is in the detail, and motorists should look out for the following points:

- The filling pressure of the tires must be adjusted to cope with the current load of the vehicle. It is important to check the pressure when the tires are cold and to observe the manufacturer's recommendations. Modern cars are fitted with a tire control system and this must be adjusted to the altered filling pressure.
- The tread depth should be clearly above the statutory minimum of 1.6 millimeters for lengthy journeys. A remaining tread depth of 3 millimeters is recommended in order to maintain good grip even when the roads are wet.
- Also check the age of the tire. After seven years' service, it is recommended to have the tires checked by an expert; particularly check to see whether the rubber mix still provides enough grip or if it has already begun to harden significantly. The DEKRA tire check found that 18 percent of the test tires had exceeded this age. Older tires are frequently found on vehicles that do not see much annual mileage such as cabriolets, trailers, mobile homes and campers. It is not recommended to use tires that are over ten years old.
- Information about the tire age can be found by consulting the four-digit DOT number on the flank of the tire. The number sequence 2916, for example, means that the tire was manufactured in calendar week 29 of the year 2016.



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Stressed out? Concentrate on what's important

Tips against stress at work

First things first

Many employees are feeling increasingly stressed at work. The pandemic, breakdown of the delivery chain and the impact of the Ukraine crisis have made a difficult situation even worse. This makes it all the more important to take systematic advantage of existing methods of reducing stress. "We must ensure a good work-life balance and find time to rest and recover in our life. We need to give our mind the daily opportunity of relaxation," says Karin Müller, Manager of DEKRA's People and Health division. Her suggestions are:

When at work, factor in timely breaks and do not wait until tiredness overcomes you. Sometimes you merely have to briefly leave your workstation in order to get a breath of fresh air and stretch your legs.

It is also helpful to think about how you organize your work. It is important to prioritize your tasks; ask yourself which ones are important, which are urgent or which ones are both. "Cut out the clutter and concentrate on what is important and urgent first. It can be highly effective to write down the five most important points for the next day on the evening before and put together a to-do list," says Müller. This clears the head, but still keeps a focus on the important tasks.

At the same time, it is advisable to free up time in your appointment calendar and cut back on multitasking, as otherwise this will lead to work overload in the long run. It is better to concentrate on one thing at a time. This also means finding time to eat and not resorting to a working lunch. You need downtime to talk to colleagues, too.

According to the work psychologist, a good work-life balance also requires sufficient movement and exercises to counteract the effects of work as well as sufficient, restful sleep. "Take time to do things that do you good such as, for example, go for a walk, have a massage or use relaxation techniques." A new perspective on things can also help. In other words, you should not let yourself be steamrollered by stress, but direct your attention to happier things, such as a bouquet of flowers at the workplace, good food or a walk in the countryside.

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Out and about on a pedelec: risks often underestimated

Safe cycling on a pedelec

Improved mobility bring new risks

It would appear that the cycling world has been waiting all its life for a pedelec. More than 8.5 million of these electrically-aided bicycles can now be found rolling along Germany's roads and there seems no end to the success story. In 2021, the number of electric bicycles sold rose further to two million. However, anybody making the switch from a normal bike to a pedelec, or as a debutant is discovering the joys of cycling thanks to the electric tailwind, should beware.

“Cycling on a pedelec is all well and good, but the risks are continually underestimated,” believes DEKRA cycle expert Jochen Hof. Pedelecs are heavier, swifter and, as a rule, less maneuverable than normal bicycles. In addition, the hydraulic brakes feel unusually sluggish for cyclists accustomed to conventional brakes. “It takes a bit of time to get used to these sorts of things,” explains Hof. “I recommend cyclists to slowly acquaint themselves with their new bike to build up their confidence until they feel safer.” Inexperienced cyclists can also avail themselves of special cycling safety training programs.

Members of the older generation should be especially cautious. The Federal Statistics Office reported that more than half of fatally injured cyclists were aged 65 or older in 2020. The physical frailty of the elderly is bound to play a role in these figures. “The conclusions to be drawn here must be to cycle in a correspondingly defensive manner and without fail don a protective helmet; in fact, this applies to all age groups,” the expert stresses. It is advisable to wear a high visibility vest when cycling in poor visibility and in the dark, or to wear a jacket fitted with reflective patches.

In turn, other road users must be aware that pedelec cyclists are frequently out and about at significantly higher speeds than you would expect from a cyclist. Dangerous situations abound: intersections, not following the rules of the road and entering and exiting a road. The statistics reveal that a widespread cause of accident is the “road-worthiness” of the cyclists themselves, above all the influence of alcohol, non-observance of rights of way, excessive speed and allowing too little distance to other road users.

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Representative DEKRA survey: majority in favor of mandatory helmet wearing

The majority of people in Germany are in favor of mandatory helmet wearing by cyclists. These are the findings of a recent nationwide survey conducted by the forsa Institute on behalf of the technical services organization DEKRA. Six out of ten (59 percent) of interviewees were in favor of cyclists – irrespective of the type of bike, being obliged to wear a helmet. As regards e-bikes, i.e. pedelecs or S-Pedelecs, the figures were even clearer. Three quarters of those asked (77 percent) came out in favor of mandatory helmet wearing. According to the survey results, however, fewer than half of cyclists regularly donned a helmet when out and about on a bike. DEKRA Info



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Accident researchers: Incorrect sitting posture leads to risk of life

DEKRA accident researchers warn against passengers taking up a seating position that is too comfy in the front seat of their car. Biomechanical expert Andreas Schäuble points to recent crash tests and warns that “lounging, sprawling or putting your feet up on the dashboard largely negates the protective effect of belt and airbag in an accident.” An excessively reclined position of the seat back can lead to “submarining”, meaning that the passenger can slip out from under the safety belt and lose all retentive effects of the belt system. Schäuble warns, “to put it clearly and succinctly, front passengers reclining and lounging in the car are risking their life in the event of an accident.” Also, putting your feet up on the dashboard can cause serious injuries in the event of an accident. “Here the legs will be catapulted by the airbag against the front passenger’s head and upper torso. The waist belt can penetrate deep into the stomach area and damage internal organs. Moreover, it can cause fractures of the pelvis and hips. This is why it is also important for a front passenger to have the correct seating position and adopt an upright posture with feet in the footwell.” DEKRA Info