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Safely to school: A slight detour can boost safety

DEKRA experts have called on all road users to be particularly vigilant and look out for children on the road. The new school year is nearly upon us and many children will have to get used to taking a new route to school. Caution is to be exercised especially in the vicinity of schools, nurseries, sports facilities and near bus stops.

Caution around harvest time: Intention to turn off the road often recognized too late by other road users

Around harvest time motorists and motorcyclists need to be aware of the heightened risk of accident especially in rural areas. Many a combine harvester and tractor-drawn trailer will be out and about on the nation’s roads in the coming weeks. Especially in the countryside it is essential that road users keep their wits about them and drive carefully.

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Please don't! Never step out onto the road between two vehicles

Safely to school

A slight detour can boost safety

DEKRA experts have called on all road users to be particularly vigilant and look out for children on the road. The new school year is nearly upon us and many children will have to get used to taking a new route to school. Caution is to be exercised especially in the vicinity of schools, nurseries, sports facilities and near bus stops. DEKRA reminds motorists that the younger the children, the more motorists need to be prepared for unexpected behavior. Despite the falling accident figures, general education schools reported some 52,500 accidents on the way to and from school to the statutory accident insurance organization in 2020.

For those children beginning school for the first time, it is worth parents' while to work out the safest route to school and practise it with their children. "It can well be that the shortest route is not necessarily the safest," stresses DEKRA accident expert Thomas Gut, "Slight detours can frequently bring a great safety benefit." He recommends that parents repeatedly practice the future school route with their children at the standard times. This enables parents to point out dangerous spots to the children and to go through what to do step by step.

One of the most dangerous situations for children is crossing the road. The best thing to do is to cross at safe points, such as at traffic lights or at zebra crossings. However, here, too, the child must be taught how to cross to the other side in the safest manner. This means that they should wait at the edge of the curb and look left, right and left again before stepping out onto the road. The child should display its intention by stretching out an arm, and if possible, establishing eye contact with passing cars before taking the shortest path across the road.

Children out and about are always safer if they are clearly visible for other road users. This is a concern in autumn especially when the days begin to draw and visibility worsens. Contrasting clothing and reflectors fitted to jackets and school satchels are important safety details. DEKRA has once again relaunched its "Safety Caps" campaign and distributed bright red baseball caps sporting distinctive reflective elements to children up and down the country. The campaign combines a practical aid for the safety of the most vulnerable road users, with an appeal to motorists to drive even more cautiously and considerately at this time."

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Additional accident risks during the harvest period

Caution around harvest time

Intention to turn off the road often recognized too late by other road users

DEKRA experts warn readers that motorists and motorcyclists need to be aware of the additional risk of accident around harvest time especially in rural areas. Many a combine harvester and tractor-drawn trailer will be on the nation's roads in the coming weeks. Especially in the countryside it is essential that road users keep their wits about them and drive carefully.

Danger frequently arises when harvesters or tractors towing trailers slowly enter or traverse country roads. If another vehicle happens to be approaching at speed at the same time, a slight inattentiveness can lead to a hairy situation. DEKRA crash tests have shown that such accidents tend to end catastrophically. Designed for use in the field, agricultural machines and equipment are incompatible with standard road vehicles," says Head of Accident Research and Accident Analysis at DEKRA, Peter Rucker. "This means that crumple zones may well prove ineffective and the required delay before an airbag is triggered may be lacking. Motorcyclists also face a host of additional risks."

Especially on narrow country roads with bends and rises it is absolutely essential that motorists adjust speed appropriately and drive only as fast as would allow them to bring the vehicle to a halt within half of the visible road," says accident researcher Peter Rucker. In addition, many older agricultural vehicles still in use have very dark lights. Rear lights and indicator lights might also be hidden by equipment or covered in dirt.

As a result, the greatest caution must be exercised during all overtaking maneuvers. The excessive width of an agricultural piece of machinery combined with narrow country roads can make overtaking a risky business. A highly dangerous situation also ensues when the motorist fails to realize until too late that the agricultural vehicle intends to turn left. This all too often leads to serious accidents. "When overtaking, the motorist is looking out for any oncoming vehicles and may fail to notice that the agricultural vehicle is signaling left. Therefore, Rucker recommends that it is always a good idea to reduce speed, take in the situation and only overtake when it is completely safe." DEKRA Info



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Had a crash: First secure the accident site

What to do after an accident?

Stay calm and secure the accident site

The police registered more than 2.3 million road accidents in Germany in 2021. And when an accident does happen, many people's nerves are on edge. DEKRA experts give readers some basic advice: take a deep breath, stay calm and collected so that you don't make things worse.

"The first thing to do is switch on the warning lights and put on a high-visibility vest, if possible whilst you are still in the car. As a driver it is your job to remind your passengers to be careful and to get out on the side farthest from traffic and to pay attention to moving vehicles. The aim is to leave the road as quickly as possible and seek out a safe area, for example behind a crash barrier," says DEKRA accident analyst Thomas Gut.

The next task is to set up the warning triangle: in town at least 50 meters from the vehicle, on country roads 100 meters and on the highway at least 200 meters from the scene of the accident. If the accident site is hard to see, the warning triangle must be set up at a sufficient distance from the object that is hindering sight, such as a bend or a rise. At night the vehicles must have their lights on. An additional yellow beacon or flashing light on the roof of the vehicle creates even more safety.

If there are injured or at least the suspicion of such, immediately ring the rescue services and attend to the injured parties. The standardized emergency number 112 in Europe is free of charge. It is now time to note down the details of everybody involved in the accident, their registration numbers and insurance information. Also record the accident details, for example, by means of the European accident report (available from insurance companies) or the DEKRA checklist "Accident! What now?" It is recommended not to admit liability or sign anything to this effect.

As a rule, it is also advisable to collect evidence, especially if the police has not been called to record the accident. This is best achieved by taking numerous photos of the accident scene, vehicles and other pieces of evidence. If possible, and before this, mark the final position of vehicles and wheels on the road with French chalk. The DEKRA Mobil app as well as the PDF brochure "Accident! What now?" offer more information on www.dekra.de.

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Electric scooters: Rapid rise in accident figures

More and more accidents involving electric scooters

Inebriated, riding where they shouldn't and too fast

Electric scooters have established themselves in next to no time as a mobility solution for that last mile in urban centers. The fashionable electric two-wheeler is especially popular with the young. The downside of this development is the equally rapid rise in the accident figures. From 2020 to 2021, the number of people injured in electric scooter accidents more than doubled nationwide, from 2,298 to 4,882, according to official statistics. This trend seems to have continued into this year, too. Figures released by the Interior Ministry of Baden-Württemberg indicate another rise of almost 76 per cent in the number of injured in the first half of 2022.

DEKRA accident researcher Luigi Ancona says "It appears that many a rider feels somewhat too confident as they whizz along on their electric steed. We even have to assume that the number of unreported cases is also high, because many minor accidents are bound not to be recorded by the police." The most common offences recorded in 2021 were scooting under the influence of alcohol (18.1%), incorrect use of the road including sidewalks (18.1%) and inappropriate speed (7.4%).

"There is much to suggest that many users of electric scooters are unaware of the applicable traffic rules or deliberately ignore them," says DEKRA accident researcher Luigi Ancona. When it comes to road use, the same rules apply to electric scooter users as to cyclists. You are obliged to use cycle paths and dedicated lanes; if there are none, you have to switch to the roadway. Unless expressly approved, sidewalks and pedestrian zones are out of bounds for electric scooters. Anyone wishing to ride an electric scooter must be at least 14 years old. A driver's license is not required, but you do need a small insurance number plate.

Ancona recommends driving with extra care when it is wet. Especially on curbs, manhole covers, track depressions and cobblestones, it is easy for the small wheels of the electric scooters to get caught or lose grip. The accident expert also reminds readers that the blood alcohol limit of 0.5 per thousand (novice driver: 0.0) also applies to electric scooters. Anyone who fails to observe this will endanger their car driver's license by driving under the influence of alcohol.

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New service: Real-time air quality measurement

Companies, municipalities and authorities can now monitor the air quality in the immediate environs even more easily and at much lower cost than with official measuring devices. Developed by DEKRA, the process involves decentralized measuring devices that determine air pollutants in real time and transmit them online to a monitoring system. The experts position the measuring devices at suitable spots, interpret the data, verify the plausibility and validity and evaluate the readings. In contrast to periodic and time-consuming official measurements, the DEKRA system is low cost and can provide operators of facilities and infrastructure with real-time information about the current levels of pollution, such as fine dust, nitrogen oxides and ozone. DEKRA Info



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Car leaking oil: No small matter

DEKRA experts warn motorists who find a patch of oil under their vehicle that a small leak can result in major damage. "Motorists shouldn't take this sort of thing lightly, but rather find out where the leak is coming from," says motor vehicle expert Harald Eder. He recommends going to a specialist workshop as soon as possible and have the mechanics there check whether the oil is leaking from the engine, transmission or another hydraulic system. If oil gets into the catalytic converter, there is a risk that the oil will ignite and possibly cause a fire. In addition, a patch of oil on the road can be particularly dangerous for cyclists and motorcyclists. "An oil leaking vehicle also pollutes the environment and is classified as a major defect at the periodic inspection," says the expert. "However, if you discover the cause quickly enough, you have a good chance of solving it by means of a minor correction." DEKRA Info