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“If you are reliant on the car in winter on any type of regular basis, there is really no way around fitting winter tires,” says DEKRA tire expert Christian Koch. “Winter tires increase driving stability, shorten braking distances and reduce the risk of skidding on wintry road surfaces.” Having said that, the tires still require sufficient grip, and that means they should not be too old and must still have sufficient tread depth.

Insufficient distance: the third most common cause of accident

Keeping your distance has been one of the basic rules during the Corona pandemic, but it is also a piece of advice that should be taken to heart on the road as well, yet is all too often ignored. Road users frequently drive far too close to the vehicle in front, and this can lead to an accident. According to official statistics “insufficient safety distance” was the third most common cause of accident in more than 37,200 cases recorded in 2021. The first two places were taken by mistakes made exiting a road and turning, as well as failing to follow traffic priority regulations.

Keep the periodic vehicle inspection report somewhere safe

People getting behind the wheel of a vehicle must always ensure that they have their driving license and the registration certificate Part I (formerly the vehicle document) with them. However, it is not necessary to always essential to have the test report of the last main inspection on board. “Nevertheless, vehicle owners must keep the current main inspection report somewhere safe, at least until the next main inspection,” says DEKRA expert Jörg Sautter.

Other topics:

Experts’ warning: millions of cars on the road with faulty lights

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Veteran car battery hibernation: one percent charge loss a day

Date	Stuttgart, October 2022
Contact	Tilman Vögele-Ebering
Tel. direct	+49.7 11.78 61-21 22
Fax direct	+49.7 11.78 61-27 00
Email	tilman.voegel-ebering@dekra.com
Internet	www.dekra.com

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Tire change: Is there enough tread left on the tires?

Tire change:

Winter tires are compulsory on wintry roads

“If you are reliant on the car in winter on any type of regular basis, there is really no way around fitting winter tires,” says DEKRA tire expert Christian Koch. “Winter tires increase driving stability, shorten braking distances and reduce the risk of skidding on wintry road surfaces.” Having said that, the tires still require sufficient grip, and that means they should not be too old and must still have sufficient tread depth.

Depending on the situation, drivers in Germany are under an obligation to have winter tires fitted in Germany. The law states that vehicles in winter road conditions – to be precise: black ice, snow, slush and frost – can only be run if they are fitted with “winter” tires. Those winter tires manufactured from early 2018, are deemed “winter tires” if they bear the alpine symbol (mountain/snowflake). This symbol replaces the “M+S” marking previously employed.

An increasing number of motorists have recently turned to using all-season tires. “These tires obviously need to do the job of both summer and winter tires and at best represent a compromise,” says Koch. “They may represent an alternative for those low-mileage drivers who predominantly drive in an urban environment. This can be the case when, for example, motorists can switch to public transport in ice and snow. However, it involves motorists critically reviewing their own user behavior and routes.” says Koch.

“Irrespective of whether the vehicle is fitted with summer, winter or all-season tires, a tire can only perform its job when it has sufficient tread depth,” stresses the tire expert. The legally prescribed tread depth is 1.6 millimeters. However, DEKRA recommends motorists following the regulations in force in Austria, where winter tire tread depths are not allowed to be below 4.0 millimeters. Anything below this can significantly impair tire performance during aquaplaning and grip in snowy conditions.

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Safety risk: Almost every ninth vehicle dazzles other drivers

Experts warning:

Millions of vehicles on the road with faulty lights

The fall is here and with it the number of journeys undertaken in twilight and darkness, and all too often fog and rain also compounding the poor visibility. DEKRA experts remind readers that anybody driving on the roads at this time of year needs to be able to rely on functioning lights. As daylight begins to become shorter, it is a good time to check the lights on one's own vehicle or stop by a garage or test center.

"During the summer, a defective light is not so easy to spot. In the darker months of the year, however, a faulty rear light or a headlight set at too high a beam can quickly turn into a safety risk," warns DEKRA accident researcher Stefanie Ritter. And faulty lights are not an isolated occurrence, in fact quite the opposite. Millions of vehicles are regularly afflicted.

These findings are substantiated by DEKRA's annual lights test, which is held in October and invites motorists to have their lights checked free of charge. In 2021, approximately every fourth vehicle was out and about with faulty lights. Almost every ninth one risked dazzling other road users. Ritter stresses that "We have to realize that faulty lights are inevitably going to engender dangerous situations in poor visibility conditions. "Let's not forget that about 40 percent of all fatal accidents take place in twilight or in darkness."

Apart from properly functioning lights it is also important to dim your headlights, sooner rather than later. On cloudy autumnal days especially, it is recommended to drive with dimmed headlights throughout the day as a matter of course, and this is, in any case, prescribed in poor visibility situations such as in rain, fog or snowfall. "It is precisely in the event of such diffuse light conditions that it is important to have the automatic light system checked. This is frequently too bright to activate the dimmed headlight function although it would be important for the visibility of the vehicle," explains Ritter. In addition, speed is always to be adjusted to current visibility. According to the Road Traffic Regulations, motorists are only allowed to drive at a speed that would allow them to stop in the visible road in front of the vehicle.

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Accident expert: “Most distance-related accidents were avoidable”

Insufficient distance is the third most common case of accident

Keeping your distance also applies to the road

Keeping your distance has been one of the basic rules during the Corona pandemic, but it is also a piece of advice that should be taken to heart on the road as well, yet is all too often ignored. Road users frequently drive far too close to the vehicle in front, and this can lead to an accident. According to official statistics “insufficient safety distance” was the third most common cause of accident in more than 37,200 cases recorded in 2021. The first two places were taken by mistakes made exiting a road and turning (46,700), as well as failing to follow traffic priority regulations (42,600).

In heavy traffic, where vehicle follows vehicle, accidents are frequent when traffic flow grinds to a halt and the vehicle in front suddenly brakes. Overtaking on the highways also generates many a dangerous situation. For example, if you are too close to the vehicle in front before overtaking. Consistently fast driving also induces drivers to reduce distances. “Most of these accidents would have been avoidable if there had been more distance between the vehicles,” concludes DEKRA accident analyst Stephan Schlosser.

The Road Traffic Regulations sets out clear stipulations for this situation: “The distance to a vehicle in front must, as a rule, be sufficient so that you can stop behind even if it brakes suddenly.” This doesn’t mean that the vehicle in front can do as it pleases: the vehicle in front is not permitted to brake without a compelling reason.”

“The rule of thumb for the correct distance is, for an unobstructed view, half the speedometer figure in meters or the two-second distance rule,” explains the DEKRA accident analyst. Anybody driving at 80 km/h must keep at least 40 meters distance to the vehicle in front. The boundary posts lining the road are usually set up at 50-meter intervals and can act as a guide. “In poor visibility, such as in fog, rain, darkness, icy roads or if the road situation cannot be assessed, this safety cushion needs to be considerably greater, however,” says the accident expert. “In such situations the distance should correspond to the speedometer reading, as we must not forget that every additional meter means more additional safety.”

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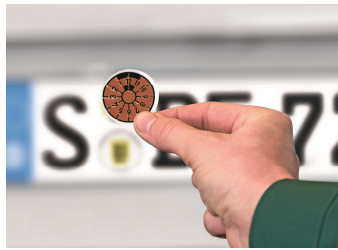


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Vehicles with brown test sticker: compulsory vehicle inspection in 2022

Keep periodic vehicle inspection report in a safe place

If lost, apply for a copy

People getting behind the wheel of a vehicle must always ensure that they have their driving license and the registration certificate Part I (formerly the vehicle document) with them. However, it is not always necessary to have the test report of the last periodic vehicle inspection on board. "Nevertheless, vehicle owners must keep the current periodic vehicle inspection report somewhere safe, at least until the next compulsory vehicle inspection," says DEKRA expert Jörg Sautter. A corresponding entry in the vehicle document or in the registration certificate I suffices as proof of a valid mandatory vehicle inspection. However, in the event of vehicle alterations the corresponding test certificates, such as the general operating permit for parts, must be stowed in the vehicle.

"Nevertheless, vehicle owners must keep the current periodic vehicle inspection report somewhere safe at least until the next mandatory vehicle inspection and submit it to all those responsible for the inspection and the registration authorities," says DEKRA expert Jörg Sautter. "There are, however, even more situations in which the report will be needed and provides good service."

If a vehicle is not awarded a periodic inspection sticker at the first attempt, the vehicle owner is obliged to have the defects rectified immediately and to bring the vehicle back for re-inspection within one month. If the test report from the previous periodic vehicle inspection cannot be produced, a completely new periodic vehicle inspection is required. This, however, comes with higher costs than the re-inspection.

However, should a vehicle inspection report go missing, it is not the end of the world. The testing organization normally allows a copy of the missing inspection report to be applied for before expiry of the due date of the mandatory vehicle inspection. DEKRA has set up a special online service on <https://www.dekra.de/de/hu-pruefbericht-anfordern/> to cater for this. The service requires the vehicle identification number from the regulation certificate. In order to prevent misuse, the copy of the mandatory vehicle inspection report can, however, only be requested by the current vehicle owner. If there has been a change in ownership since the last mandatory vehicle inspection, the consent of the former vehicle owner is needed.

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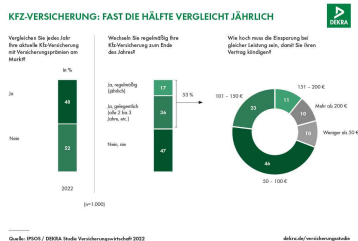


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Motor vehicle insurance: One in two cut corners

Almost one in two car owners regularly compare their current motor vehicle insurance company with the conditions offered by the competition. This is one of the findings of a recent survey conducted by the technical service organization DEKRA and the market research institute Ipsos. 48 percent of those interviewed state that they do this every year. 17 percent of interviewees admit to switching their motor vehicle insurer on a yearly basis. A further 36 percent don't change every year, but still do so every two to three years. The majority manage to save around 100 euros annually. Almost half (47 percent) of interviewed car owners, however, generally never switch their original insurer.

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Veteran car battery hibernation: one percent charge loss per day

The veteran car experts at DEKRA recommend that veteran car owners should regularly pay attention to their vehicle's battery during the winter months when the vehicle is not in use. Even if disconnected, the batteries will still discharge. Around one percent of the charge is lost every day. Low outside temperatures and connected consumers such as the cockpit clock will only compound this effect. However, if the battery discharges too much, this can severely affect the charging capacity and service life.

And this is why DEKRA's veteran car experts recommend checking the charge level of the battery once a month and recharging if necessary. Ideally, car batteries "hibernate" at room temperature, i.e., at around 20 to 25 degrees. Veteran vehicle owners have less work if they buy a trickle charger. The device continuously monitors the battery voltage and automatically charges the battery when it falls below a minimum value. For more information consult: <https://www.dekra.de/de/oldtimer-batterie/>

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