Automatic emergency call devices in all new car models from spring 2018

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Emergency call devices that automatically alert rescue services to car crashes (eCall) will have to be fitted to all new models of cars and light vans by 31 March 2018 under rules voted by European Parliament on Tuesday. Road accidents took 25,700 lives in the EU in 2014 – a death toll that the new devices could cut by an estimated 10% a year.

"Deploying the 112-based eCall in-vehicle emergency system across the EU will help to improve road safety in all 28 member states. The European Parliament has repeatedly stressed that reducing deaths and the severity of injuries on the roads is its priority. eCall as a public service, free of charge for all citizens, irrespective of the type of vehicle or its purchase price, will contribute to this common goal", said rapporteur Olga Sehnalová (S&D, CZ).

The eCall in-vehicle system uses 112 emergency call technology to alert the emergency services to serious road accidents automatically. This enables them to decide immediately on the type and size of rescue operation needed, which in turn helps them to arrive faster, save lives, reduce the severity of injuries and cut the cost of traffic jams.

Data privacy: no vehicle tracking

MEPs strengthened the draft law's data protection clause to preclude tracking of eCall-equipped vehicle before the accident occurs. Under the new rules, the automatic call would give the emergency services only basic minimum data, such as the type of vehicle, the fuel used, the time of the accident, the exact location and the number of passengers.

The rules say eCall data gathered by emergency centres or their service partners must not be transferred to third parties without explicit consent of the person concerned. Manufacturers will also have to ensure that the eCall technology design permits full and permanent deletion of data gathered.

Ready from spring 2018

All new models of passenger cars and light commercial vehicles will have to be equipped with the eCall system as of 31 March 2018. MEPs also secured an obligation for the European Commission to assess, in the three years after spring 2018, whether eCall devices should be included in other vehicles, such as buses, coaches or trucks.

These new rules set out obligations for car manufacturers. Separate rules, governing the infrastructure that EU member states must put in place by 1 October 2017 to process eCalls, entered into to force at the end of June 2014.

Next step

Parliament's vote ends the EU legislative procedure. The regulation will enter into force on the twentieth day after its publication in the Official Journal of the European Union.

Procedure: Co-decision, second reading agreement

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