

eCall to be introduced on all new vehicles in 2018

EU Parliament outlines conditions for system's entry as a standard release

THE EUROPEAN Parliament has voted to introduce eCall on all new vehicles sold from 2018 onwards, although manufacturers can add the system to their cars before this time.

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.

MEPs strengthened the draft law's data protection clause to preclude tracking of eCall-equipped vehicles 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.

Data deletion

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.

There were fears that the introduction of eCall could lead to vehicle manufacturers using the system as a 'back door' to receive other information through telematics. The news that the regulations surrounding data transfer have been tightened will help to ensure this does not happen, although there may be further loopholes that can be exploited.

According to market analysts Frost & Sullivan, the 2014 ban on telephone roaming charges in Europe will provide a favourable scenario for an interoperable eCall or telematics solution in vehicles. However, the commission states the fact that manufacturers will have to foot the bill for its installation means vehicle prices are likely to increase by at least €100.

Therefore, there could be just cause for manufacturers to offer connected services on a subscription based platform. Frost & Sullivan Automotive & Transportation Program Manager, Niranjan Manohar, explains: "OEMs will have to understand the potential revenue in installing such devices across vehicle lines. Using a subscription-based business model



SAFETY: eCall will only transmit basic data in the event of an accident

will take harnessing vehicle data into the next generation of advanced services and tap into revenue potential of approximately €12 billion. This will enable OEMs to lengthen customer relationships to over three years and tap into the potential of long-term maintenance and service business opportunities post vehicle sales."

Finding profit

While eCall has to be available free of cost for users, OEMs will have to convince consumers to pay more for a connected vehicle to absorb additional costs. According to Frost & Sullivan estimates, this can only be rolled out by offering connected services that will continue to operate on a subscription basis after the initial free period.

As OEMs are most likely to bear the costs for implementing eCall in vehicles, they will focus on specific benefits and features that can secure some profit. Assessing possible opportunities within telematics ecosystems, service opportunities and service value will be one of the ways forward.

Lengthening the customer relationship by tying them into a subscription package which could link to servicing information and diagnostics being handled through the manufacturer themselves however could cause issues for the independent aftermarket. While customers are currently not obliged to take their cars to a dealership for warranty repairs, any subscription bases that includes a service package will only heighten the sense of belief that vehicles need to return to a dealership for this period.

Industry acceptance

The European Automobile Manufacturers' Association (ACEA) welcomed the decision, Erik Jonnaert, ACEA Secretary General commented: "With eCall to be

available on new vehicle types in April 2018, this decision brings Europe one step closer to making operational a system which we have been advocating since 2004. Vehicle manufacturers are committed to protecting their customers' privacy. However, at the end of the day, we cannot forget that the primary purpose of eCall is safety. The industry feels that the final text strikes a good balance between saving lives and protecting data."

Philippa Oldham, Head of Transport at the Institution of Mechanical Engineers, adds: "This technology automatically alerts emergency services in the case of a serious car accident providing the exact location using Global Positioning Systems. The vote by the EU Parliament is very welcome news as these technologies have the potential to cut road fatalities by as much as 10%.

"Since 2012, the Institution has been calling for the mandatory roll out of the eCall system, as well as collision-avoidance technologies for all buses and lorries, which could help eliminate cyclist and pedestrian deaths caused by driver 'blind-spots'. We hope this vote by the EU and UK Government to examine other ways intelligent transport systems can help improve transport safety."

The eCall system will be mandatory in new vehicles from 31st March 2018 although manufacturers can add the system prior to this. At the SMMT Connected conference in March, Dr Wolfgang Ziebart, Group Engineering Director at Jaguar Land Rover, confirmed that the company was already planning on introducing eCall in its vehicles from 2016.

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INFLATABLE: Simulated crashes to ensure data was transmitted correctly