



ESC-APING WITH YOUR LIFE

ESC has the potential to save 4,000 lives every year. So why is it taxed as a luxury item like your heated seats or your DVD player?

THE motor industry thrives on three-letter-abbreviations — or TLAs for short.

If it wasn't for TLAs such as ABS, VSC, ASR, VVT and even the penal VRT, car advertisements would be full of tongue-twisting technical terms — and road-test reports would read like visual obstacle courses.

But while most of us know that ABS (Anti-lock Braking System) stops wheels from locking up under braking, and ASR (Acceleration Slip Regulator) stops them spinning out of control when we accelerate, few of us give these systems much thought — until the moment our lives depend on them.

Option

Worse, in the days when it was an option, a surprising number of car buyers opted for a CD player over ABS.

Why? Probably because a box in the dash that plays music is far sexier than a box under the bonnet that does nothing — until you need to brake hard to avoid a five-year old.

Thankfully, by law, all cars must now

have ABS.

Because of this, our lives — or deaths — are no longer dictated by our love of music.

Competition

Equally, intense competition among carmakers has pushed up the number of airbags in most cars from the legal minimum to a healthy 4, 6 and even ten airbags in some models.

However, even though most of us wouldn't buy a car with a low rating from the EuroNCAP crash experts, few buyers know what ESC stands — or that it has the potential to outshine just about every other piece of safety kit in the car.

And, it could be argued, that even includes the car's crash rating — simply because ESC can prevent having the

crash in the first place.

Control

ESC is short for Electronic Stability Control. Depending on the car make, it is also known as ESP, VSC, CST and DSC. Regardless of the TLA, they all work the same.

In essence, ESC is a box of electronics that sits under your bonnet doing nothing but monitoring your car's behaviour.

It only kicks in if, for example, you drive too fast into a bend — or need to rapidly change lanes on the motorway to avoid a collision.

Then, ESC moves to prevent a catastrophe by braking individual wheels and even decelerating the engine, to keep the car from skidding.

Physics

It can't turn the laws of physics upside down by getting you round hairpins at impossible speeds. But it can cut out 80% of skidding accidents.

And when you consider that near half of all skids lead to death, that makes ESC the most important safety device available.

Choose ESC! is an EU-wide campaign aimed at encouraging buyers to put ESC on the wish list of their next new car. It is supported by both the EU Commission and EuroNCAP.

Last week it ran graphic demonstra-

tions of ESC's ability to save lives during a day-long event at Mondello race circuit in Kildare.

And as they showed how cars perform with and without ESC on a wet obstacle course, even the skeptics became convinced of ESC's lifesaving ability.

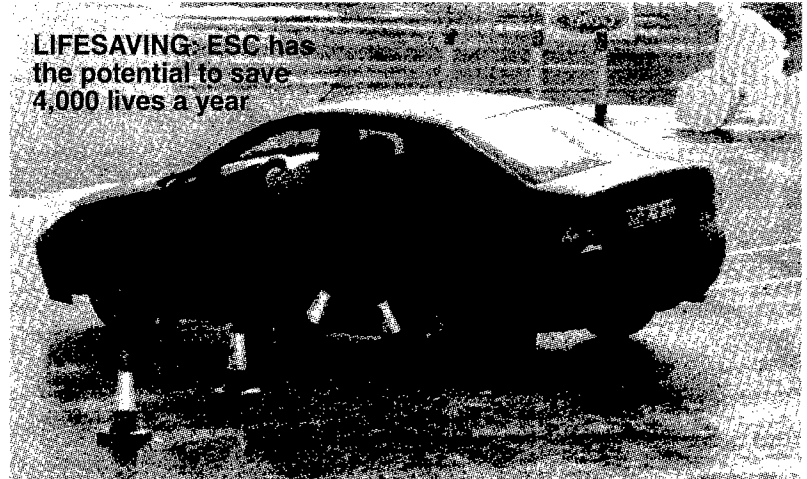
Luxury?

Until recently only sports cars and luxury makes came with ESC as standard, with most others offering it as an optional extra.

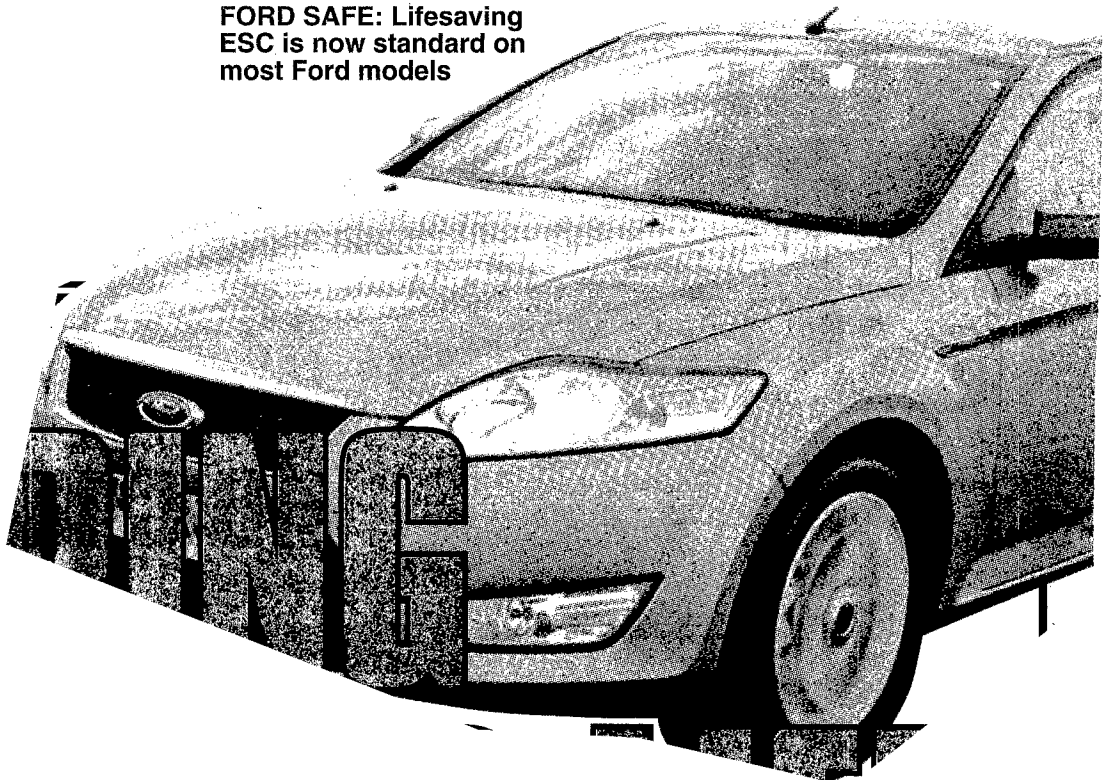
Ford now include ESC as standard across almost their entire range — including their van line-up — and they are to be congratulated for this.

Hopefully others will follow Ford's good example, which undoubtedly is saving lives every day in Ireland.

In the meantime, we buyers could do worse than lobby another TLA — the RSA (Road Safety Authority) and ask them to demand that other TLAs such as VRT and VAT be dropped immediately on so-called luxury items like ESC, so that all car drivers can enjoy its lifesaving benefits.



**FORD SAFE: Lifesaving
ESC is now standard on
most Ford models**



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