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Safe driving with the mobile home: adjust your driving style

People out and about in a mobile home in the summer must be aware that they need to completely change their driving style. The home on wheels is significantly heavier than the average car and is also longer, wider and higher and consequently is a completely different beast. “This can lead to miscalculations on the road and critical situations.” warns DEKRA accident researcher Luigi Ancona.

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Novice drivers: the risks of newly gained mobility

DEKRA Road Safety Report 2022: “Mobility of Young People”

Young people at high risk on the road

Young people continue to constitute a high-risk group on the road – especially novice drivers. “Everybody involved should be employing all available means and doing everything they can to counter this trend,” says DEKRA Automobil GmbH managing director, Jann Fehlauer, speaking at the launch of the DEKRA Road Safety Report 2022 “Mobility of Young People”.

According to the IHME Institute based at the University of Washington, around 175,000 people aged between 15 and 24 years of age lost their life on roads across the world in 2019. Those accidents involving young people were characterized by four determining factors: male, driving a car or riding a motorbike, traveling too fast and possibly under the influence of alcohol.

For the extremely high-risk group of novice drivers, the heightened risk factors also included a lack of experience, overconfidence, insufficient control of the vehicle, restricted awareness of risk, and distraction, for example, by the use of digital media and the influence of alcohol or drugs. “Just because you have passed your driving test does not entitle you to consider yourself a highly competent driver with nothing more to learn. Usually the opposite is the case,” stressed DEKRA managing director Jann Fehlauer. “Even after having passed the driving test, ongoing practice on the road is necessary – just like learning a new sport.”

As young motorists are frequently at the wheel of older vehicles, the periodic vehicle inspection constitutes an essential element of road safety. Head of DEKRA Automobil Fehlauer states that “As a rule older cars display serious faults far more frequently and represent a greater risk of accident than new vehicles.”

The DEKRA Road Safety Report 2022 “Mobility and the Young” is available for download online on www.dekra-roadsafety.com. Here you can also find all the previous reports and more detailed information, for example in the form of animations or interactive graphics.

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The vacations have arrived: preparing well for the road

DEKRA tips for your vacation

Arriving at your destination without stress

“Start off those precious few weeks of the year stress free and maintain a certain degree of equanimity.” This is the one piece of advice that DEKRA accident experts would impart to all motorists before they embark on their car journey to their holiday destination. Excessively fast driving and fatigue, but also overloading and inadequate pressure in the tires, these are just some of the typical things that cause accidents during the vacation period. “Well prepared is the best way to arrive safely,” reminds accident expert Stephan Schlosser. Here are a few tips:

- Prepare your vehicle for the long journey, check the wipers, oil level and lights. Also, consult the manufacturer’s recommendations and adjust the tire pressure on cold tires for the higher load and highway trip.
- When stowing luggage do not exceed the maximum permissible values for total weight, roof capacity, trailer and support load. An overloaded vehicle impairs drivability and makes the vehicle more difficult to control. Moreover, you can reckon on a hefty fine at police controls.
- The load can also be dangerous for occupants, too. The road map tossed carelessly onto the rear shelf, or towers of cases and boxes in the station wagon can be catapulted forward under heavy braking and injure passengers. This is why heavier luggage should be stowed at the bottom, and do not stack too high. If possible secure items on top with tensioning straps or netting.
- If you can avoid it, do not start off directly on the first day of the vacation period or at the weekend, do not get behind the wheel of the vehicle in the middle of the night or directly after coming home from work, but always in a relaxed and well rested state. Otherwise, you risk the dangerous phenomenon of microsleep that time and time again triggers serious accidents.
- The driver tires quicker especially in summery temperatures. Treat yourself and your passengers to a break at least after two hours travel, stretch your legs and switch drivers. Always good are light snacks with fruit and juices as well air condition the car between 19 and 24 degrees.

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Elevator incident: stay put, it's not the end of the world

If the elevator gets stuck

Stay put!

Elevator incidents are extremely rare. But when they do occur, it is important to stay calm. “Never try to leave the lift when an elevator gets stuck,” warn DEKRA experts. “You are only putting yourself at more acute risk.”

“The worst that can happen is that you will be stuck for a bit. Elevators have several safety fail-safes and are equipped with sufficient ventilation. So, the worst thing you can do is to take matters in your own hands and try and “escape”, for example, by prying the doors open and climbing out between floors or manipulating the elevator. You are simply risking your life without reason or purpose,” warns Dirk Blettermann, elevator expert at DEKRA. The reason is that the elevator might well suddenly start moving again, for instance after a power cut.

Instead „remain calm and wait for professional help,” explains Blettermann. Also, press the emergency button long enough, that is for about three to five seconds. The emergency call center is manned around the clock and will send a member of staff, who will in general arrive within half an hour. It also enables any other questions to be asked and clarified. Anybody trapped with other passengers should try to exert a calming influence on them.

The warning against taking your rescue into your own hands is also directed at those outside the lift. You run a real risk of putting those trapped at risk. However, what they can do is speak to people in the elevator, reassure them and if not already undertaken, sound the alarm. The emergency number of the maintenance company is to be found at the entrance to the elevator. If a person inside the elevator requires medical assistance, those outside can also contact a doctor on call.

“Also remember not to use the elevator in the event of fire or if the lighting has failed,” says the DEKRA expert. It is important to always maintain a good safety distance to the doors, so that fingers or hands do not get trapped. “Also make children aware of this and maintain your distance.”

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The holiday on wheels needs to be well prepared

Safe driving with the mobile home

Adjust driving style

People out and about in a mobile home in the summer must completely change their driving style. The home on wheels is significantly heavier than the average car, is also longer, wider and higher and consequently is a completely different beast. "This can lead to miscalculations on the road and critical situations." warns DEKRA accident researcher Luigi Ancona.

"Due to the larger vehicle dimensions, you have to be extra careful when maneuvering. It is advisable to swing out a little more generously in order to take tighter curves," says the expert: "As a mobile home driver, you must also be aware of the height of your vehicle and pay attention to height information to ensure that underpasses, bridges or entrances to parking garages will not lead to your downfall."

Above all, occasional motor home owners are strongly advised to familiarize themselves with the vehicle before setting off, in the best-case scenario after going on a special driver safety training course. For example, drivers have to be prepared for a longer braking distance than with a car. The higher center of gravity that allows lower cornering speeds and makes quick evasive maneuvers more difficult also takes some getting used to. The lower acceleration rates of mobile homes means that the expert generally advises against overtaking on single-lane country roads.

Driving safely requires taking care when loading. "Stow heavier luggage at the bottom, lighter stuff on top in the upper storage compartments. That is just as important as an even load distribution; however, do not exceed the individual axle loads, otherwise you can say goodbye to driving stability," says Ancona. "The load must also be well secured so that it does not slip or slide around in the mobile home and become dangerous projectiles in the event of evasive maneuvers, emergency braking or even an accident."

Mobile homes also offer large areas of attack for cross winds. Even a strong gust of wind in an exposed location or a sudden change in wind conditions when overtaking can derail a mobile home. "If the wind whips in from the side, you must hold the steering wheel tight, step on the gas, and brake carefully. In general, both hands should always be on the steering wheel," recommends Ancona.

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Traveling abroad: when in Rome...

The experts at DEKRA remind everyone traveling abroad in a mobile home that they have to observe the traffic regulations specific to the country in question. This means speed limits, overtaking bans, but also journey-related weight, height and width limits. By the way, width also includes the exterior mirrors. In other European countries, there are also some entry bans in environmental zones and these will also differ from country to country. Some vehicle markings are mandatory, such as the "blind spot" stickers for vehicles over 3.5 tons in France. On the other hand, in Italy, Spain and Portugal rear bicycle carriers must bear a warning sign. It is, therefore, important to acquaint yourself with the rules of the respective country and also the countries you intend to pass through before you start your journey.

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