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GERMAN ROADS PUT TO THE TEST - ADAC ASKS GERMAN AUTHORITIES FOR SUPPORT

This autumn, ADAC will start the most comprehensive test yet to assess the safety of German roads. As part of the development of the Road Protection Score, important motorways, as well as selected A and B roads, are being put to the test. With specially equipped vehicles, "road inspectors" will examine safety-relevant criteria such as the width of the hard shoulder or the type of central reservation. Using the digitally processed data, stars for safety will be awarded to indicate the level of protection they offer, in the same way as the allocation of stars for safety in the European New Car Assessment Programme (EuroNCAP).

The significance of the assessment, however, could be even greater if the Länder and the Federal Ministry for Transport got involved or supported ADAC more intensively. In contrast to practice in other European countries, the German authorities have so far refused to publish the number of accidents per road, although the ADAC test will be able to objectively identify safety shortcomings of the road network without current accident figures. The results, however, would be even more convincing if concrete weaknesses in the road network could be demonstrated on the basis of accident figures since this would allow efforts to be directed toward remedying these weaknesses.

The specially developed technology for rating roads has so far only been used in Sweden. "By seeking out accident hot-spots and weaknesses in the road network, ADAC is pioneering in Germany in this field," says ADAC Vice President for Transport Dr Erhard Oehm. "Generally, we should assume that motorists make mistakes even when driving carefully. The only thing that is important is whether these mistakes lead to serious incidents or whether their consequences can be lessened by more intelligent road design." This novel and modern understanding of road safety is already being successfully practiced in England and Sweden. To what extent the German road network "forgives" the motorists' mistakes, will become clear thanks to the comprehensive ADAC road test.