

New EU cars will dial for help in case of a crash

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Europe's transport commissioner Siim Kallas gives a press conference on May 24, 2011 at the European Union Headquarters in Brussels. The EU wants all new passenger cars fitted out by October 2015 with a life-saving automatic dial-up system so emergency workers can speed to the site of a crash as swiftly as possible.

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"When an accident happens, every minute counts," the bloc's Transport Commissioner Siim Kallas said Thursday on proposing [new legislation](#) enabling vehicles to automatically call for help in case of an accident.

Last year 28,000 people died and 1.5 million were injured on EU roads. The [European Commission](#) says the automatic eCall system could speed up [emergency response](#) by 40 percent in built-up areas and 50 percent in the countryside—saving up to 2,500 lives a year.

The eCall system automatically calls 112—Europe's single emergency number—in the event of a serious crash, communicating the vehicle's location, even if the driver is unconscious or unable to make a call.

"Today's proposals are a milestone for safer roads in the EU," Kallas added.

They will also help make European vehicles more intelligent and give a much-needed shot in the arm to the bloc's struggling [auto industry](#), senior officials said.

Under the draft proposals released by the EU executive, all new models of passenger cars and light utility vehicles would be fitted with 112 eCall and infrastructure put in place to ensure handling of the calls at response centres across the European Union.

The number could also be triggered manually by a driver in trouble, a passenger or even a witness by pushing a button in the car.

Addressing concerns over privacy, the Commission said eCall does not

allow the tracking of vehicles as it sleeps until activated by a crash to send signals.

The Commission has tried for several years to introduce the system, estimated to cost around 100 euros per new car. However less than one percent of passenger vehicles currently are equipped with automatic [emergency call](#) and the systems do not necessarily operate across the bloc.

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