



Alliance  
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de Tourisme



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## PRESS RELEASE

### **AIT/FIA Foundation Unveils Device that Demonstrates Dangers of Driver Distraction**

***The AIT/FIA\* Foundation today introduced a new device that could significantly raise public awareness about the dangers of many types of driver distraction. The "Distraction Protocol Device" was designed to demonstrate to drivers the increased risks that occur when a distraction is added to the driving task.***

"This protocol illustrates that anything which takes the motorist's attention away from driving is a potentially dangerous distraction," said Karl Obermair, Chairman of the AIT/FIA Foundation. "It shows the public how common activities behind the wheel such as tuning the radio, conversations with passengers, using navigational devices and cell phones can create serious distractions."

The "Distraction Protocol" involves a task that adds to the mental workload of the driver. The task requires the subject to count boxes that appear on a screen next to the driver console, and press various buttons at specific intervals. Without distractions, drivers are able to drive and perform the task without difficulty. When a distraction is added, however, lane deviations and median crossing errors increase. Although the activity seems simple, even professional drivers had difficulty staying on course when faced with the added distractions of tuning the radio, talking on a cell phone, or using a navigational device.

In the United States, distractions are estimated to be a factor in approximately 25 per cent of all vehicle crashes, which means that out of the 6.5 million crashes reported each year, at least 1.5 million may be related to distracted driving.

While there are many research projects that currently focus on studying various aspects of driver distraction, the "Distraction Protocol" specifically demonstrates the danger of in-vehicle distraction to the motorist. International automobile clubs, in particular, may use the device for driver education courses and public awareness activities thereby increasing motorists' understanding about distractions and improving road safety.

"Some drivers unfortunately do not find out until they are involved in a serious crash that engaging in a simple task while driving can lead to a disastrous situation," said Chairman Obermair. "This device illustrates the effects of distraction on drivers, but in a safe controlled environment."

Officials from the AIT/FIA Foundation also noted that two distinct advantages to the device: its universal appeal and ease of use. Non-language-based and simple to operate, the device will appeal to a wide range of groups concerned with road-safety. It can also be installed in any vehicle or driving simulator at little cost.

"Other distraction testing devices are usually language orientated or require computational skills," said Chairman Obermair. "The uniqueness of this tool lies in its simplicity – it is easy to operate and to understand. It is a good protocol, will be useful in the training of new drivers and will educate existing drivers on the impact of distraction."

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\* The Alliance Internationale de Tourisme (AIT) and the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) are worldwide federations representing motoring, touring and open-air associations from 124 different countries around the globe.