



Virtual Racers Use Computer Games to Help Young Drivers Stay Safe on Europe's Roads

It sounds counter-intuitive to use computer games to highlight safe driving practices to Europe's youngsters, yet that's just what racers from Ford's Team Fordzilla esports team are doing.

The new initiative involves the expert virtual racers using realistic mechanics of computer games to show driving scenarios with and without real-life skills applied, such as speed management and hazard awareness. The often-disastrous outcomes when driving skills are not applied safely highlight just how important understanding different elements can be in the real world.

The videos use a multiplayer format that allows different Team Fordzilla drivers to choreograph the various scenarios on the same screen, using realistic levels of speed rather than the fast and furious pace usually associated with racing games.

A Ford-commissioned survey of young drivers found one third (33 per cent) had watched online tutorials on how to drive and over a quarter (28 per cent) had aimed to improve driving skills through computer games. Almost half (46 per cent) of those that used games felt their driving had improved as a result, so it's hoped the tutorials will have a strong resonance.

The initiative is a virtual response to Ford's Driving Skills for Life physical programme being put on hold for 2020. The usual hands-on practical driver training offered by the programme has seen 45,000 young drivers across 16 European countries take part since it began in 2013. In 2019, 96.4 per cent of the 7,534 participants stated they felt more confident in their ability to drive safer as a result of the training.

Team Fordzilla

Ford launched Team Fordzilla – its first ever esports team – in 2019 with individual teams in France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK, consisting of hand-picked racers. Each team competes in national competitions with dedicated team captains, with the best drivers representing Team Fordzilla at a European level.

In 2019/20 Team Fordzilla entered a European team in the Le Mans Esports series. For further updates, follow them on Twitter (@TeamFordzilla), Instagram (@teamfordzilla) and Twitch (@TeamFordzilla).

How it works

A total of six training modules in English, French, German, Italian and Spanish will be hosted on the [Ford of Europe YouTube channel](#) covering:

- Introduction/ Seat Positionin
- Braking with and without ABS/ Safe brakini
- Hazard recognition/ Safety distanc
- Speed management/ Slip contro
- Feeling the car and driving the vehicl
- Live show

Five videos using the computer game mechanism will be shown to participants with the final session a live streaming event to answer followers' questions.

Young drivers

Traffic accidents are the number one cause of death for people between 18-24-years old in Europe with more than 38,000 killed each year. Of those, 67 per cent are drivers*. A Ford-commissioned survey also revealed some alarming habits of young drivers: 58 per cent have used their phone while driving; 57 per cent have checked the messenger service WhatsApp and 27 per cent have watched a boxed set show while behind the wheel.

The survey from September 2019 of 5,000 drivers aged between 17-24 years old in France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK also revealed:

- 84 per cent claim that using a phone while driving should receive a severe punishment
- 18 per cent have had an accident or near miss while using their phone
- 91 per cent have never been stopped by the police while using phone and driving
- 27 per cent have used their phones at speeds in excess of 80km/h (50mph)

However, driving skills also ranked as the second most important life skill to have behind only cooking.

Quotes

“The visuals and driving dynamics in computer games are incredibly realistic and make for a remarkably effective way to safely show young drivers the often-terrible consequences of driving errors. You might have infinite lives in computer games but in real life you get just one.”

Debbie Chennells, Ford Fund Manager, Ford of Europe

“As gamers people think we live in a bit of an imaginary world, but the skills we learn in gaming definitely translate. To be able to use them in a format young people are familiar with to demo safe driving in the real world is great, even if it’s at much slower speeds than we’re used

José Iglesias, Spanish captain, Team Fordzilla

Links

- Videos: https://www.youtube.com/user/fordofeurope/playlists?view=50&sort=dd&shelf_id=27

* European Commission, 2018 road safety statistics https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/MEMO_19_1990