

## 2017 Fleet Management Trends: Safety Tech

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*Photo of dynamic radar cruise control courtesy of Toyota.*

Commercial fleets seeking to reduce distracted driving and the associated risks are requesting more semi-autonomous features with leased vehicles such as frontal braking, as well as other safety aides such as backup cameras, Bluetooth, and adaptive headlights, according to fleet management company experts.

"The distracted driving epidemic has forced fleets to pay greater attention to the safety features included in the cars they offer," said Beth Kandrysawtz, CEO of Motorlease Corp. "More and more of our clients have become intrigued by features such as automatic braking and blind spot information systems. As these features eventually become standard equipment, look for innovations such as car-to-car communication to lead the next wave of available safety options."

In recent model years, automakers have begun offering some of these safety technologies on lower trim grades so commercial fleets can continue purchasing base model vehicles. All 2018 model year vehicles must have a backup camera under regulations finalized by the U.S. Department of Transportation in March of 2014.



*Kandrysawtz*



*Frank*

"Active frontal crash avoidance systems and adaptive headlights are showing some of the best results in reducing accidents and are becoming more common," said Dan Frank, president of Wheels, Inc. "And rearview backup cameras are becoming standard. Manufacturers are doing a better job offering safety packages for fleet that do not require expensive model upgrades."

Safety technologies expected to gain greater popularity among fleets in 2017 include Bluetooth, lane keep assist, electronic stability control, adaptive cruise control, adaptive headlights, collision warning, park assist, back-up camera, reverse sensing system and telematics devices, said Cindy Gomez, Donlen's vice president of vehicle acquisition services.

"The majority of these options are not standard equipment and require our customers to upgrade to a higher trim or forces a customer to select a package that has non-related safety items included in them," said Gomez. "Since safety has become such a high priority for fleets, I see manufacturers beginning to standardize more of these options."

In 2017, fleets will install telematics for reasons that go beyond driver productivity, said Tom Coffey, vice president of sales and marketing for Merchants Fleet Management.



*Gomez*



*Coffey*

"Back-up cameras will become nearly universally standard along with Bluetooth and some form of telematics for safety reasons even more so than tracking driver efficiency," Coffey said.

Bluetooth has become more prevalent in recent years, and helps fleets reduce crash risk without breaking the bank.

"The top safety option that we see being added throughout our fleet profile is Bluetooth," said Mark Donahue, manager of fleet analytics and corporate communications with Emkay.

"This is a relatively inexpensive option that greatly reduces distracted driving, helping to reduce accident related expenditures."



*Donahue*



*Bensel*

Fleets working with Element Fleet Management have expressed a desire to use hardware or software that block the use of cellphones and other mobile devices while the vehicle is in motion, said Eliot Bensel, vice president of technical sales and advisory services for risk, safety and accident management.

"We are hearing that controlling cell phone use — whether using software installed by the OEM or external hardware — is also a high priority," said Bensel. "Until these features are readily available and practical to install and use, the needs will remain for the foreseeable future."

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