

AL-KO has final sway



Total photo(s): 2

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words - [Chris Fincham](#)

Fish tailing could be a thing of the past with a new electronic anti-sway system to be released for caravans with electric brakes

Victorian RV components manufacturer AL-KO is set to release an electronic stability control system specially designed for Australian caravans fitted with electric brakes.

The electronic stability control (ESC), which automatically detects and corrects dangerous levels of sway, is similar to the AL-KO ATC Trailer Control that's been available in Europe since 2007 for caravans that use mechanical brakes.

AL-KO sales representative Andrew Baker said the ESC was designed in Australia in conjunction with AL-KO Europe and is being built at the company's Dandenong South headquarters in Victoria.

Like electronic stability control on a car, caravan ESC senses when a van's instability is verging on hazardous, and automatically applies the correct amount of braking required to avoid an accident.

The product takes the form of a black box sensor installed under the van at the rear of the axle. The box is wired to the van's front end and connected to the tow vehicle via a plug.

An LED fitted to the drawbar indicates whether the unit is in on or off mode, and the system works independently of any other stability system including the tow vehicle's.

"It has to be a jack-knife situation (before it intervenes)," explained Baker. "We've actually had CAMS racing car drivers come down and test this, with a caravan on the back down at Sandown (circuit) through the witches hat with it on and off... and as the caravan sways it comes on and just pulls it straight and (the van) goes through the rest of the witches hats flat on its wheels."

At least two versions will be available, catering for single and tandem axle vans.

Pricing has yet to be announced, but Baker said the ESC would be available first to caravan manufacturers later this year.

"We've already spoken to a lot of the manufacturers and they're keen," he said. "As soon as they're set up it will be available to the general public for retro-fit on older caravans."

AL-KO holds patents for the ESC worldwide and it's estimated the system could be installed in up to 270,000 new vehicles globally, as well as millions of used caravans and motorhomes. The mechanical brakes version is currently available on the British-built Bailey caravans sold in Australia.

AL-KO is planning a media and industry launch of the new ESC at Melbourne's Sandown Raceway around mid-2012. Stay tuned for a full review of how it works...

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