

Always in the background and still an important part of modern Formula One: Bernd Mayländer, the Official Formula One™ Safety Car driver.

The FIA is responsible for the deployment of the Official Formula One™ Safety Car and sends it onto the track in hazardous situations. Bernd Mayländer gives exclusive insights into the world of safety in Formula One™.

In 2000 the FIA entrusted the task of driving the Official Formula One™ Safety Car to Bernd Mayländer, a successful touring-car driver. He knows how to keep the pace during the safety period just high enough so that the race-car tires do not cool down too much. Bernd started his career in karting at the end of the 1980s. In the following years he progressed to Formula Ford, the Porsche Carrera Cup, the DTM and the FIA GT Championship. In 2000, he won the 24 Hour Nürburgring in a Porsche 911 GT3-R.



The Official Formula One™ Safety Car on-track at the French GP in 2008

“In the field of safety, a lot has changed over the past few years. Regardless of which Formula One topic you speak about, whether it is the race car, the circuit, or the procedure of a Safety Car deployment – everything is being actively thought about and there is always room for improvement. There are different departments within the FIA which are responsible for safety in Formula One and there are many regulations which are created in co-operation with the F1 teams. These intensive exchanges with the drivers ensure a constant improvement,” comments Bernd Mayländer.

“I believe that we already have a very high level of safety existing currently however, we do not want to only maintain this level of safety, we want to constantly improve it!”

Interview with Bernd Mayländer from August 2007

Tell us about the Official Formula One™ Safety Car?

“It is the safety vehicle used in Formula One. In the 2007 season, it was a 507-HP Mercedes-Benz CLK 63 AMG and during the 2008/2009 season, I will be using a 525-HP Mercedes-Benz SL 63 AMG.”

When are you called upon to go onto the track?

“According to the official regulations of the Fédération Internationale de l’Automobile (FIA), the car is deployed “if competitors or officials are in immediate physical danger but the circumstances are not such as to necessitate stopping the race”, e.g. after an accident or in severe rain showers.”

What’s the role of the Official Formula One™ Safety Car?

“It takes up its position at the front of the field and leads the Formula One cars around the track at reduced speed until the dangerous situation has passed. All the cars, beginning with the race leader, must line up behind the Safety Car. Lapped cars that are positioned between two competitors involved in a duel are allowed to move to the back.”

Who decides when you should take to the track?

“The decision is made by the FIA Race Director, Charlie Whiting. He also decides when the Safety Car phase is finished.”

How are the drivers informed about the Safety Car phase?

“The drivers are notified by the marshals who wave yellow flags together with a board showing the letters ‘SC’.”

How long does the Safety Car remain on the circuit?

“It will remain until the hazardous situation is under control and the FIA feel that it is safe to resume. The laps that are driven during the Safety Car phase count as normal race laps. If the specified number of laps is completed, a race can also come to an end behind the Safety Car.”

What influence does a Safety Car phase have on the race strategy?

“As a rule, the teams use a Safety Car phase for an unscheduled pit stop, because it involves a much smaller loss of time than if the field is racing at full speed. If a team manages to bring its driver into the pits at exactly the right time, it can result in a crucial advantage. Because the field is pressed up close together during a Safety Car phase, it also increases the excitement for the spectators.”

Since when has the Safety Car been used in Formula One™?

“Its first introduction was in 1973 at the Canadian Grand Prix. However, the FIA laid down clear guidelines for the role of the Safety Car in 1992.”

About Allianz Formula One™ sponsorship

Since 2000 Allianz has utilized the global platform Formula One™ to convey the importance of safety in an effort to transport these practices to everyday roads. Allianz first entered into Formula One™ by becoming an official partner of the Williams team. In 2002, trackside branding was initiated to drive brand awareness worldwide, primarily targeting Europe and Asia. In 2007 Allianz reduced the engagement with WilliamsF1 and became an “Official Global Partner of Formula One™,” providing exclusivity in the Financial Services sector and an increased focus on safety.

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