



## F1 Safety – The Accident Process

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Welcome to Sidepodcast, this is the fifth episode of our miniseries F1 Safety. We've looked at the safety of the cars, what circuits do to help, and the medical facilities in place. Today we're going to put them all together and run through the accident process.

Starting at the very beginning, to have an accident, first you need drivers. To participate in an F1 weekend, you need to have an FIA superlicence, and these are granted based on good results in some of the feeder series, or perhaps another exceptional circumstance. If a driver is not well before the weekend begins, he can be replaced by the team's third driver, and substitution is acceptable up until the start of qualifying. Otherwise, the team will just have to run with one car.

Once a session is underway, then the cars will head out onto the track and do what they do. If a mild incident occurs, such as a driver running wide and having to regain the track, then the marshals will wave a single yellow flag. This is an indication to other drivers that there is something to be wary of and they need to reduce their speed. Overtaking is also prohibited under yellow flag conditions. Double waved flags are for a slightly more serious incident, as it tells approaching cars that they need to be prepared to stop if necessary. If the danger is easily removed, i.e. the off-road car regains the track and continues on its way, then green flags will be waved to show that it is all clear.

If the danger is too great, then the red flag is waved. This can either mean that an accident has left a car in a precarious position, that there is too much debris on track for conditions to be safe, or that the weather is too hazardous to continue. The red flag means the session is instantly stopped. Cars must return to the pit lane unless the race has begun, in which case they head to the main straight to wait for further instructions.

Whilst we're on the subject of flags, there are a few others to be aware of. The blue flag is waved to tell a car that it needs to move out of the way of a faster car behind it – this occurs during a race when the leader is lapping back markers. A black flag means a driver's race is over, and this is usually because he has been driving without due care. This often occurs if a car leaves the pitlane when the light is red. A white and black diagonal flag is a pre-cursor to the fully black flag, a sort of warning for bad behaviour. A black flag with an orange circle indicates to a particular driver that his car is dangerous and needs to pit, whilst a flag of red and yellow horizontal stripes means the track surface is slippery and due caution is required. This is commonly shown after an incident leaves oil on the track. Finally, a white flag occurs if there is a slow-moving vehicle on the track, for example one of the rescue vehicles – however this is rarely seen as the safety car or a red flag situation has usually been employed at this point.

Moving on to the safety car, then, the Mercedes-Benz will be deployed during a race if conditions are hazardous and require cars to slow down, but it is not quite severe enough to bring proceedings to a complete halt. The Safety Car will pull out from its position at the end of the pitlane, pick up the race leader, and guide the train of cars round the track at a controlled speed, taking whatever safe line avoids the scene of an accident. It has been known for the cars to have to navigate through the pitlane, if an accident has occurred on the main straight. Behind the safety car, there is no overtaking, and drivers are tasked with making sure their tyres stay warm for the restart. It is the Safety Car driver's responsibility to make sure speeds are low, but not so slow that tyre temperatures become dangerous themselves.

Bernd Maylander has been behind the wheel of the Merc since 2000, having progressed through the ranks of karting, Formula Ford and DTM. He is in charge of the car through the entire weekend, including the support series as well. Bernd also attends the drivers' briefings to be aware of any specific safety worries for the weekend. There are two safety cars, and two mechanics are employed to make sure they are in tip-top condition.



Peter Tibbetts is the co-driver in the car, and both men are in contact with Race Control and Race Director Charlie Whiting throughout the Safety Car period. The Safety Car has flashing lights on top of it, and when the track conditions are safe these will go out to indicate to the F1 drivers following behind that it is returning to the pitlane, and the racing can restart.

That is it for today's episode of F1 Safety. We have covered most of the aspects of modern safety in Formula 1 now, so for the next couple of episodes we'll look at how things have changed and improved.

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