

DID YOU KNOW???

QUIET CARS TO BECOME NOISIER

Normally quiet hybrid and electric vehicles will be required to make noise under a new federal rule intended to protect pedestrians. According to an article in the February 1, 2017 issue of "Status Report" from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) announced the rule in November 2016. Manufacturers will have until Sept. 1, 2019, to equip all new hybrid and electric vehicles with sounds meeting the standard. The announcement comes nearly six years after Congress directed NHTSA to come up with a requirement for adding noise that would warn pedestrians about the approach of a hybrid or electric vehicle, according to the IIHS.

Unlike internal combustion engines, electric motors are silent. Quiet vehicles can pose a risk to anyone on foot or bicycle, but advocates for the blind brought attention to the issue.

Under the standard, hybrid and electric vehicles will have to emit a motor-like sound while moving forward or in reverse at speeds up to 19 mph. At higher speeds, the additional sound isn't required because wind and tire noise provide adequate warning to pedestrians. The vehicles also will have to emit the sound while stationary if they aren't in park.

The IIHS supported the requirement, citing in its comment to NHTSA research by the Highway Loss Data Institute (HLDI) that confirmed the additional danger hybrids pose to pedestrians. The HLDI analysis found that hybrids were about 20 percent more likely to have a bodily injury liability claim without an associated claim for vehicle damage than their conventional counterparts. Such claims are likely to result from pedestrian crashes, according to the IIHS.

As a bicycle rider along our roads, I can certainly appreciate this new requirement. While most of a bicyclist's warnings and feedback is through eyesight, a significant feedback comes from sounds, like approaching vehicles from behind. With electric or hybrid vehicles, these sounds are missing, unless artificially introduced as per this requirement.

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