

Southern Illinois Center for Independent Living

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Hybrid Cars May Include Fake Vroom for Safety

Source: New York Times

For decades, automakers have been on a quest to make cars quieter: an auto that purrs, and glides almost silently in traffic.

They have finally succeeded. Plug-in hybrid and electric cars, it turns out, not only reduce air pollution, they cut noise pollution as well with their whisper-quiet motors. But that has created a different problem. They aren't noisy enough.

So safety experts, worried that hybrids pose a threat if pedestrians, children and others can't hear them approaching, want automakers to supply some digitally enhanced vroom. Indeed, just as cellphones have ring tones, "car tones" may not be far behind — an option for owners of electric vehicles to choose the sound their cars emit.

electric vehicles in the future.

The notion that battery E.V.'s and plug-in hybrids might be too quiet has gained backing in Congress, among federal regulators and on the Internet. The Pedestrian Safety Enhancement Act of 2009, introduced early this year, would require a federal safety standard to protect pedestrians from ultra-quiet cars.

Karen Aldana, a spokeswoman for a traffic safety agency, which is also working on the issue, said, "We're looking at data on noise and E.V. safety, but manufacturers are starting to address it voluntarily."

A Toyota spokesman, John Hanson, said: "I don't know of any injuries related to this, but it is a concern. We are moving rapidly toward broader use of electrification in vehicles, and it's a fact that these cars are very quiet and could pose a risk to unsighted people."

A study published last year by the University of California, Riverside and financed by the National Federation of the Blind evaluated the effect of sounds emitted by hybrid and internal-combustion cars traveling at 5 miles per hour.

People listening in a lab could correctly detect a gas-powered car's approach when it was 28 feet away, but could not hear the arrival of a hybrid operating in silent battery mode until it was only seven feet away.

Some electric-vehicle drivers have taken a low-tech approach to alerting pedestrians. When Paul Scott of Santa Monica, Calif., drives his 2002 Toyota RAV4 electric car, he often rolls down the windows along busy streets and turns up his radio so people know his virtually silent vehicle is there.

Mr. Scott, vice president of the advocacy group Plug In America, said he would prefer giving drivers control over whether the motor makes noise, unlike, say, the Fisker Karma, which will make its warning noise automatically.

"Quiet cars need to stay quiet — we worked so hard to make them that way," he said. "It's the driver's responsibility not to hit somebody."

"It should be a manually operated noisemaker, a button on the steering wheel triggering a recording of your choice," he said. "It could play 'In-a-Gadda-Da-Vida,' or anything you like."

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Working with Hollywood special-effects wizards, some hybrid auto companies have started tinkering in sound studios, rather than machine shops, to customize engine noises. The Fisker Karma, an \$87,900 plug-in hybrid expected to go on sale next year, will emit a sound — pumped out of speakers in the bumpers — that the company founder, Henrik Fisker, describes as "a cross between a starship and a Formula One car."

Nissan is also consulting with the film industry on sounds that could be emitted by its forthcoming Leaf battery-

electric vehicle, while Toyota has been working with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the National Federation of the Blind and the Society of Automotive Engineers on sounds for electric vehicles.

"One possibility is choosing your own noise," said Nathalie Bautres, a spokeswoman for BMW's Mini division, who added that such technology could be added to one of BMW's

Copyright Owners Fight Plan to Release E-Books for the Blind

Source: wired.com

A broad swath of American enterprise ranging from major software makers to motion picture and music companies are joining forces to OPPOSE the passage of a new international treaty (called Treaty for Sharing Accessible Formats of Copyrighted Works for Persons Who are Blind or Have other Reading Disabilities) that would make books more accessible to persons who are blind.

This change would allow to cross-border sharing of digital books that are currently copyright protected and thus not available in digital format outside the county of origin.

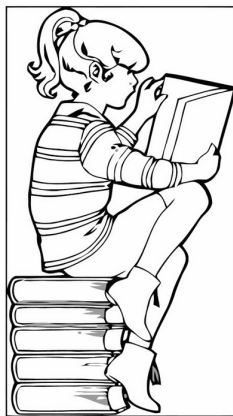
This treaty would be one of the first to favor would be readers of international works rather than the copyright owners, and it would make copyrighted material more accessible to the blind by loosening copyrighted restrictions instead of following the tradition of tightening them as all past treaties have done.

This does not sit well with American businesses since it publicly poses the concern that the treaty would spawn a rash of internet book piracy. Other entities feel the treaty would “begin to dismantle the existing global treaty structure” as it appears to be at odds with “existing, longstanding, and well-settled norms!” Additionally, the Association of American Publishers suggests that the blind and disabled should pay for materials to ensure the digital market (which serves them as well as sighted) flourishes.

The proposed treaty could free up thousands of book titles to millions of blind people across the globe — without payment to the publisher! However, many nations, including England, the United States, and Canada, have copyright exemptions that usually allow non-profit companies (such as the Library of Congress) to market copyrighted works without permission.

Under the proposed draft treaty, where it appears that privileged copies could be made even where accessible versions were commercially available, copyright owners would have understandable doubts about the wisdom of investing in the production of accessible versions for the market.

Therefore under these circumstances, publishers will not unreasonably hesitate and wonder whether they can expect such a market to flourish when potential customers would still have the option of relying upon a statutory exception to get an accessible version of a work without having to pay for it.



Facts about Disabilities and Flu

Source: flu.gov

The term “disability” refers to limited physical or cognitive capacity. It includes people with neurological and neuro-developmental conditions, such as disorders of the brain, spinal cord, peripheral nerve, and muscle (e.g., cerebral palsy, epilepsy/seizure disorders, stroke, intellectual disability/mental retardation); moderate to severe developmental delay; muscular dystrophy; and spinal cord injury. These chronic conditions interfere with functional capacity. “Disability” also includes people with other chronic health conditions that interfere with functional capacity.



Having a disability alone may not place someone at higher risk for complications from the H1N1 virus, but other factors may put a person with disabilities at higher risk. You may be at risk if you are a: young child, pregnant woman, person with arthritis, person with asthma, person with cancer, person with diabetes, person with heart disease or person with HIV/AIDS.

Among people with disabilities, the following groups are at higher risk of acquiring the H1N1 infection:

- People who have difficulty breathing – (ventilator users and individuals with asthma and other respiratory conditions – this could include individuals with a range of disabilities such as intellectual and developmental disabilities, cerebral palsy, spinal cord injury, seizure disorders, and metabolic conditions).
- People who have difficulty fighting infections or who are immunocompromised – (individuals with HIV, cancer, and other types of immune suppression, or individuals using immunosuppressive medications).
- People of any age who have chronic health conditions (heart disease, metabolic [i.e., diabetes], renal, hepatic, hematological [i.e. sickle cell anemia], pulmonary, or neurological disorders).
- People who have pharmacological dependency.
- People younger than 19 years of age who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy due to their risk of developing Reye’s Syndrome.
- Children prone to dehydration from poor nutritional and fluid intake caused by prolonged vomiting and diarrhea, or underlying metabolic conditions.

Reduce Your Risk of Flu Infection

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to minimize contact with other persons who might be ill with 2009 H1N1 flu.
- Follow local public health advice regarding school closures, avoiding crowds and other social distancing measures based on illness in specific communities.
- Maintain your health and if prescribed, continue to take antiretrovirals or antimicrobial prophylaxis against opportunistic infection.

Brain Scan Could Allow Autism Diagnosis in Infancy

Source: Disability Scoop

Brain scans detecting a sound processing delay common in children with autism could lead to earlier diagnosis of the developmental disorder.

In a study of children with and without autism, researchers monitored brain activity while the children listened to various sounds. They found that it took children with autism an average of 11 milliseconds longer for their brains to respond.

“This delayed response suggests that the auditory system may be slower to develop and mature in children with ASDs,” said study leader Timothy Roberts of Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia. “An 11-millisecond delay is brief, but it means, for instance, that a child with ASD, on hearing the word ‘elephant’ is still processing the ‘el’ sound while other children have moved on.”

The finding is significant because it could lead to a single, measurable tool for diagnosing autism as early as infancy, researchers say. Currently autism is diagnosed using clinical observation and the disorder can take years to manifest. If diagnosed at younger ages, experts say treatment could be more effective.

“More work needs to be done before this can become a standard tool, but this pattern of delayed brain response may be refined into the first imaging biomarker for autism,” Roberts said.

More People with Disabilities Employed in December

Source: Disability Scoop

December brought a hint of good job news for people with disabilities, the Labor Department reported.

For the second month in a row, the unemployment rate declined for people with disabilities falling to 13.8 percent, down from 14.1 percent in November. Meanwhile unemployment rose from 9.2 percent to 9.5 percent among the rest of the population. These numbers are not seasonally adjusted.



The drop in December was coupled with a rise in the number of employed people while the number of people who are not seeking work appeared to remain steady. That marks an improvement over the situation in November when a drop in unemployment was accompanied by a decrease in the number of people with disabilities looking for work.

The Department of Labor began tracking employment among people with disabilities in October 2008. The data covers people with disabilities over the age of 16 who do not live in institutions. The first employment report specific to this population was made available in February 2009. Now, reports are released monthly.

Obama Announces Nearly \$100 Million for Autism Research

Source: Disability Scoop

The National Institutes of Health is awarding nearly \$100 million in grants — the most ever — to research the causes of autism and look for treatments.

The funding is part of \$5 billion that's being awarded by the NIH to study autism, cancer and heart disease, among other conditions. The grants represent half of the NIH funding allotment from the federal economic stimulus package enacted earlier this year.

Collectively, the grants are “the single largest boost to biomedical research in history,” President Barack Obama said at the NIH.

The grants also represent the largest single amount of money allotted for autism research.

The funding for autism research will go toward studying the DNA of people with autism and their parents and establishing better diagnostic screening tools. Researchers will also look at prenatal and early life risk factors for autism, test early interventions and adapt treatments known to work with young children so that they can be effective with older kids and adults.

“What we learn will hopefully lead to greater understanding, early interventions, more effective treatments and therapies to help these children live their lives and achieve their fullest potential, which is extraordinary,” Obama said.

Jackson County Premise Alert Program

On August 28, 2009, the Illinois Premise Alert Program (PAP) Act became effective in Illinois. The PAP is a safety program that supports individuals living with disabilities as well as Police Officers responding to calls at a specific address. PAP is a database of individuals with special needs that is kept in a computer aided dispatch (CAD) database and is to be maintained by public safety agencies at the request of families, caregivers, or individuals with disabilities or special needs. The PAP allows families to voluntarily notify the police and first responders about their special circumstances free of any charge. The PAP will assist police departments to identify individuals who have special needs, which will enable the responding officer to have additional information at his/her disposal. If you reside in any Jackson County community other than Murphysboro, please contact the Jackson County 9-1-1 Office at 618-457-5911. For Murphysboro residents, contact the Murphysboro Police Department at 618-684-2121.

Thank You

SICIL staff would also like to thank everyone again for contacting Governor Quinn and local Representatives voice the need for Personal Attendant and Training Program.

The funding for the Personal Attendant and Training Program has been 80% reinstated. Therefore, SICIL will continue to be able to provide screening, background checks, and lists of potential Personal Attendants to persons who request them. As you can see, advocacy does work!



SICIL

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This newsletter is available on audio tape

Interesting Facts about Disability

Source:VSA art's program Express Diversity

- Homer, ancient Greek writer of “The Iliad” and “The Odyssey,” was blind.
- The typewriter was invented as a private writing device for a blind member of a royal family. Other developers of early typewriters also designed for individuals who were blind.
- In 1776, Stephen Hopkins referred to his Cerebral Palsy when he signed the U.S. Declaration of Independence saying, “My hands trembles, but my heart does not.”
- When Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone in 1876, he was attempting to convert speech to visual representation in order to accommodate for his wife’s hearing loss. Unfortunately Bell’s invention failed to convert sounds to visual representations, though it extended verbal communications in ways Bell never could imagine.
- In 1984 Gallaudet University football quarterback Paul Hubbard created the “huddle” to prevent the opposing team from seeing the signs the Gallaudet team used to communicate their next play to their teammates.
- Baseball hand signals used by umpires to signify balls, strikes, out and safe originate from Outfielder William Hoy’s request to umpires that they use sign language because he was deaf and could not hear the umpires’ verbal calls.

