

## **Automakers Reach Agreement on Sound for Electric Cars**

Posted by Lyle

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Electric cars operate very quietly, which is one of the strong selling points to drivers who appreciate silence. Visually impaired pedestrians and other road occupants such as bicyclists however, rely on the sound of combustion engines to negotiate safely.

As such, blind advocacy groups have been working with automakers for two years to reach a consensus on whether and how electric cars should be equipped with sounds. Recently an agreement was reached.

Automakers will equip their electric cars with audible pedestrian alert signals that will not be driver activated. These chirping sounds would automatically be emitted when the car operates at low speeds to let pedestrians know that it is nearby.

When the first generation Volt goes on sale later this year it will be equipped with a manually activated pedestrian alert, however when the new agreement goes into effect, the sound will have to be automatic. Nissan has equipped the electric LEAF with an automated chirp.

“Bruup, bruup” is how Micky Bly, GM’s executive director for hybrid electric vehicles and batteries imitates the sound that will be made by the Chevy Volt. The manually toggled stalk will sound “like the low tone of a horn, but nonstartling.”

Mark Perry, marketing director for Nissan said the LEAFs’ sound will be revealed to the public next week in Japan. Earlier reports indicated it would sound like the flying cars in the movie Blade Runner. “It’s a little too early to disclose it, but when we do you’ll understand the work that went into it from our audio guys,” said Perry.

The often proposed idea of downloadable ring tones for electric cars seems unlikely. “We do hate the idea of ring tones,” said Chris Danielsen, a spokesman for the National Federation of the Blind. “We think manufacturers should decide the sound or set of sounds, and drivers should not be able to alter them willy-nilly.”

The electric car sound measure is incorporated in the Motor Safety Act of 2010 which was already proposed in congress and is expected to be ratified into law by the end of summer.

A group of auto trade groups in cooperation with the National Federation for the Blind sent a letter to Congress stating the new law would “will help to ensure the safety of pedestrians, especially those who are blind, as an increasing number of hybrid and electric vehicles are sold.”

Extract from GM-Volt: Chevy Volt Electric Car Site – June 5, 2010

<http://gm-volt.com/2010/06/05/automakers-reach-agreement-on-sound-for-electric-cars/>

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The new legislation would require the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration to begin drafting the requirements within 18 months and the rule would have to be finalized within three years.

David Strickland who is the director of the NHTSA said his agency is reviewing the agreement which will also be extended to hybrids.

“Our analysis of limited data from 12 states shows that hybrid electric vehicles do have a significantly higher incidence rate of pedestrian crashes than internal combustion engines,” he said.