

CAR CORNER

Look Law, No Hands!

(NAPSA)—If you've ever glanced into the car stopped next to you at a light and saw someone wildly gesturing and talking to him- or herself, you're not alone. It happens to hundreds of motorists every day. You might even do a double take the next time this happens because the motorist you're looking at may actually be using his or her cell phone through a hands-free device.

Hands-free devices will become common with many drivers as new laws take effect in California and Washington state July 1, prohibiting drivers from using a cell phone in a moving vehicle unless the driver is using a hands-free device. Many other communities in the U.S. have these laws on the books already.

One such hands-free device, SYNC, is the newest innovation from the minds at Ford Motor Company and Microsoft. It provides consumers the convenience and flexibility to bring digital media players—Apple iPods, Microsoft Zunes and other MP3 players—and Bluetooth-enabled mobile phones into their vehicle and operate the devices via voice commands or with buttons on the vehicle's steering wheel or radio controls.

Connecting a music player to a vehicle requires only the USB cable, which comes with the device. SYNC can even play music directly from a thumb-drive, audio-in jack or chronicle music from music-compatible cell phones.



More motorists will be using hands-free devices as communities across the nation prohibit them from using cell phones while driving.

When a music device such as an iPod or Microsoft Zune is connected, music on the device can be cataloged, and with a simple voice command, such as “Play artist Bon Jovi” or “Play genre country,” it will begin playing the desired music.

For hands-free calling, the system enables car occupants to pair up to 12 different phones via an always-on Bluetooth connection. SYNC can download the phone's contact list, enabling drivers to place calls using voice commands. SYNC's voice recognition system has settings for English, Spanish, and Canadian French.

For the many text messages being sent and received today, SYNC can even read incoming messages from some phones, and will give you an option for pre-designated replies.

The new legislation in California and Washington state requiring hands-free cell phone use, and new tools such as this hands-free device, aim to reduce the number of distracted-driving accidents.

In a message to Californians, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger said, “With the implementation of this law [SB1613], many lives will be saved from car accidents caused by distracted drivers.” The California Highway Patrol recorded 4,236 traffic fatalities in California in 2006, citing cell phone use as the No. 1 cause of distracted-driving accidents.

At Ford, the new system is upgradable to support the devices and services of tomorrow.

“SYNC is what today's generation and today's drivers demand in connectivity,” says Derrick Kuzak, group vice president, product development, Ford Motor Company. “Not only does it offer hands-free phone operation and iPod, Zune or MP3 player connectivity, it's built on a software platform that is upgradable and will allow us to offer new features by simply upgrading the software.”

The in-car communications system is available in 12 Ford, Lincoln and Mercury vehicles and Ford estimates there will be 1 million SYNC-equipped vehicles on the road by early 2009.

To learn more about SYNC and to check if your phone or music player is compatible, visit www.syncmyride.com.