

Comment from John Walsh

NHTSA is considering an option to allow drivers to select various noises for their vehicle to emit. These noises are intended to allow people who cannot or do not see approaching vehicles to be on notice of an immediate life safety risk. As a fire officer, I fear for the safety of myself, my crew, other public safety personnel, and civilians on scene. At the scene of a motor vehicle crash, I am always listening for many critical sounds: speech, moaning, snoring, gasping or other breath sounds from victims, verbal messages from crew members or victims, the sound of rescue tools to determine their effectiveness, sounds from the vehicle warning of impending danger, the sounds of my fire pump indicating whether it has water and is maintaining pressure, radio messages, the sirens of approaching emergency vehicles, noise from approaching vehicles, skidding noises, the sound of our traffic cones being run over. My inability to immediately identify and evaluate any noise that I hear puts everyone on scene at risk. This is why silent cars should either emit one standard national sound, or a series of sounds to estimate the speed of approaching vehicles. The concept of operators being able to select among sounds that their car will use to warn me needlessly put the lives of public safety personnel at risk. At the very least trying to identify different sounds is a distraction with possible fatal consequences. Just say NO.