

Comment from A K

Pedestrians do in fact rely on their hearing to maintain an awareness of their surroundings when walking in the vicinity of cars. Frequently the first indication of a vehicle approaching from behind is the sound that it makes. The requirement for electric and hybrid vehicles to have noisemakers is therefore well-founded in safety, in my opinion.

There is some discussion by other commenters about whether noisemakers are a reasonable requirement for electric vehicles, since many modern gasoline engines are also quiet at low speeds. However, a gasoline powered car that is accelerating rapidly from a stop revs loudly, warning others that it is about to pick up speed. An electric vehicle has the potential to accelerate quickly and silently, catching pedestrians off-guard. A requirement for EVs to make a sound (at least) when accelerating or traveling fast is therefore not unreasonable.

It is also important in my opinion that the sounds that vehicles make are consistent, especially for vehicles of the same model. A pedestrian who is unable to see an approaching vehicle still has some indication of the type of vehicle based on the pitch and loudness of the engine noise. A small gasoline car, a large diesel truck, a sports car or muscle car, and a motorcycle all sound different, and in context, warrant different levels of precaution to be taken. For instance, on a rural road, a pedestrian may move off the roadway into the grass on the side for a truck approaching from behind, but not necessarily for a small car or motorcycle.

Allowing drivers to choose the sound their car makes takes away the predictability of relating sound to vehicle size, reducing safety for both pedestrians and the driver of the vehicle. A particular model of vehicle should only be allowed to make one type of sound, and this sound should be similar to the sound a gasoline engine of size appropriate for the vehicle would make.

I am not opposed to electric and hybrid vehicles, and firmly believe they are the future of transport. But at least until they become more common on our streets and people get used to them, regulating the sound they make is an important factor in reducing the number of preventable collisions.