

Comment from Anonymous

The NHTSA's attempt to "accommodate" people with disabilities is laughable. Despite the fact that profoundly deaf individuals have safely held a valid driver's license for decades, the NHTSA has continuously ignored their safety. The NHTSA's blatant and repeated lack of consideration for the lives of deaf drivers is astounding. Before car lots were invaded by keyless ignitions, vehicles were equipped with adequate visual cues and warnings in place, even if by "accident" to inform drivers who have no hearing capabilities. Even without the ability to hear a vehicle's engine running, deaf drivers were given assurance that, when the key to their vehicle had been physically removed from its ignition, said vehicle's could no longer run. Over thirty (30) individuals have lost their life to carbon monoxide poisoning caused keyless vehicles that were inadvertently left running. The majority of these individuals were elderly and/or suffered from various degrees of hearing loss. Very limited google research reveals the NHTSA's knowledge of same, and further, that the NHTSA at least engaged in communications/meetings with deaf advocacy groups like TDI regarding the issue. Yet where are those records? Good luck on getting a meaningful FOIA response from the NHTSA. Rather than address the very simple and obvious dangers to ALL drivers, the NHTSA has worked for years to provide blind pedestrians and passengers protection. Don't get me wrong, that should be an initiative as well, but why the avoidance regarding deaf drivers? Why all the secrecy? In July of last year Kentucky native, Connie R. Dotson, died in her sleep from Carbon Monoxide while her Toyota Rav4's engine ran throughout the night [Toyota, by the way, is responsible for more than half of the known deaths caused by keyless ignitions.] Connie lived her entire 54 years non-verbal and in profound silence. She was valedictorian of her graduating class in high school and the first deaf student to be accepted into the Kentucky Governor's Scholar program. Thereafter, Connie obtained her BA from Gallaudet University and immediately upon graduating she began her 30-year career as a Federal employee by working on Capitol Hill for a senator. There are not enough characters here to list all of Connie's accomplishments. She was a cherished and beloved role model and advocate within the deaf community yet her life ended because her Toyota Rav4 provided only an audible warning when she stepped away from the running vehicle. Pending litigation shows that Toyota responded to this allegation in its Answer by stating that Connie should have "Seen the vehicle's exhaust" which the Company contended was an adequate visual warning. Further research shows that the owner's manual for Connie's Rav4 defines the key to the vehicle as the key fob, rather than the electronic key code. Connie likely thought that her vehicle could not continue to run as long as she removed the "key" from its location. Shame on you NHTSA. Shame on you.