

MAINTENANCE



Going Hands Free

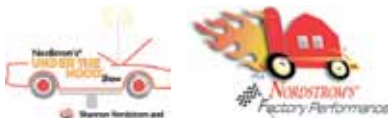
Last month I talked a bit about driving distracted and the dangers of it. The more technology we have available to us, the more likely it will find its way into our cars. Laws are being passed to prevent us from driving while using a distracting device like a cell phone but many are secondary, meaning unless you are being stopped for something else or you had an accident caused by using the device you won't be ticketed. It's up to us to be in responsible control of our devices and operate our vehicles safely.

Device manufactures are also being hard pressed to start making in-car devices safer with hands-free interfaces. Here are some of the very cool options that are available to us now and some that will appear soon in new models.

Jaguar was one of the first to offer such voice-activated convenience features as early as 1999 with activation of options such as heat and air, navigation, and phone. Just speak a word and the heater could change temps, make a call, or navigate to your destination without taking your eyes off of the road. Others have followed with voice-activation such as On Star, probably one of the most recognizable names in voice-activated technology today. On star allows you to make and receive calls and ask for directions hands free.



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More recently, features to make our portable devices such as cell phones and iPods hands free have been arriving in our cars. Ford's Sync by Microsoft has made a huge impact on the hands free media craze and is one of my personal favorites and I hope to see this technology widely available in other vehicles soon. With Sync you can bring your mobile phone, iPod and many other usb devices into your car and access them hands-free. Text messaging has got to be the number one distraction while driving; Sync reads text messages for you and translates them to audio. It will do the same for email. Sync also transfers many features of your phone such as the address book and even custom ringtones to identify individual callers. When using an iPod you can tell Sync what song to play instead of searching through your songs on the iPod screen.

No matter how much hands free tech-

nology is available to us, it only keeps us safe when we use it. If you have hands free devices, use them, the life you save may be your own.

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