

Morganton News Herald – Sunday, December 4, 2016

Generations



Test driving cars of the future

By Peg DeMarco - Special to The News Herald

An article on the Internet a couple of days ago about the latest and greatest snazzy new features available to the driving public was interesting, although it made me realize how uncool my 2008 car is without features that come standard today in a fairly new car, such as a back-up camera, blind spot monitor, automatic emergency braking, lane departure warning, or tire pressure monitoring system.

So, before I rave about what's in store for the future, I thought I would touch on what's available now so that those of you thinking about purchasing a new car might want to use this when you walk into a car dealership.

The back-up camera helps drivers see objects directly behind them while backing up, but www.mycardoeswhat.org cautions that the good old standby of looking over one's shoulder and in the mirrors as you back up doesn't hurt either. The camera shows a wide view behind the car while in reverse, even at night, but the view may not be clear due to snow, dirt or direct sunlight.

The blind spot monitor warns drivers of cars in blind spots and may provide an additional warning if you use your turn signal when there is a car next to you in another lane by using a symbol, sound or vibration. However, the monitor is limited and may not detect motorcycles or very fast moving vehicles.

The automotive braking system senses slow or stopped traffic ahead and urgently applies the brakes if the driver fails to respond. Although it can't always prevent a rear end collision, it may lessen the severity of one.

The lane departure warning system alerts you if you're drifting out of your lane using visual, vibration or sound warnings. I thought this was a really good feature for those long, boring trips on Interstate 40 when you're traveling from Morganton to Raleigh, especially right after Statesville. I've had to throw water on my face a time or two when I used to travel for the job. However, the website warned that when lane lines are covered or faded, the system may fail, so the bottle of water may also be a good idea.

My husband has the tire pressure monitoring system on his truck. Although he is quick to respond to the ding sound, the system has often not been right by reporting too much air or not enough.

Future features, and some in operation now, includes Amazon Echo at the top of the list. According to the article, Ford has shown how voice activation can work, even when you're at home, and using the Amazon Echo, you can start your car and even tell it to run the air conditioner. It's being worked on in test labs, so look for it in the very near future if not already rolling out as I write this.

And, if you have an Apple Watch and a Volvo, you can now start your car, adjust climate control settings, and lock the doors with a simple swipe on the watch.

If you own a Tesla Model S, you can summon it out of the garage or tell it to park on its own. It will even open and close the garage door. Visiting www.tesla.com, and specifically the Model S, there are some mighty remarkable tricks this baby can do. Tesla's website promises: "All Tesla vehicles produced in our factory, including Model 3, have the hardware needed for full self-driving capability at a safety level substantially greater than that of a human driver." Leave you a bit cold?

The Cadillac CT6 has cameras to help you park in front and back and its front camera can record a trip and save the results for you.

Mazda has the edge on keeping its passengers happy when the driver decides to drive fast around a corner. Its technology allows for passengers to lean into a turn by analyzing the vertical load on the tires and making adjustments automatically when driving on a curve – perfect for those trips to Blowing Rock or up any steep mountain.

There were more, but I've run out of space, so let me end with a quote from www.mycardoeswhat.org that I loved: "You are your car's best safety feature."

Peg DeMarco can be reached at pegdemarco@earthlink.net.