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Dave McClure • Feb. 18, 2012

Last month in my “Bleeding Edge” column of the CPA Practice Advisor Magazine, I wrote about the growing war between Microsoft, Apple and Google over the newest tech frontier — voice control of your computing devices. If you don't subscribe to the magazine, shame on you! But here is a link to the column:

www.cpapracticeadvisor.com/10601880.

All three companies want to have the winning system that most easily controls your computers — desktop, laptop, tablet and smart phone — by voice alone.

And they may have to hurry. Because the US Department of Transportation is now pushing for new national regulations to prohibit virtually anything from being done on any computing device by the driver of any vehicle.

Mark Hachman at PCMag.com summarizes it this way:

“So far, the proposed guidelines would only affect in-vehicle communication systems. But DOT also held open the possibility that future restrictions would clamp down on smartphones and tablets, and even crack down on voice-activated controls.”

The regulations, if imposed and enforced, could dramatically alter the future of connected vehicles within the United States, as well as how US drivers use devices like GPS navigation systems and cell phones.

The department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) would establish specific criteria for electronic devices installed in vehicles at the time they are manufactured that require visual or manual operation by drivers. In other words, those devices could have controls built in that could prevent them from functioning while the vehicle is in motion, or allow them to operate in a less-distracting state.

The recommendations have been published in the Federal Register, and the public

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The goal of the regulations is to cut down or eliminate distracted driving, which contributed to 16 percent of all fatal crashes in 2009 and 20 percent of injury crashes, according to the NHTSA. The percentage of drivers who were text messaging or visibly manipulating hand-held devices while driving increased significantly from 0.6 percent in 2009 to 0.9 percent in 2010, according to the National Occupant Protection Use Survey, which was also conducted by the NHTSA.

A report released Thursday by the Governors Highway Safety Association found that the number of 16- and 17-year-old driver deaths in passenger vehicles increased slightly for the first six months of 2011. Troy Costales, the GHSA chairman, said in a statement that he favored “absolutely prohibiting any type of cell phone or electronics device use while driving.”

You can read the full text of the article at
<http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2400384,00.asp>.

Meanwhile, you may want to examine the state of voice commands, and start altering your habits to match.

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