

From Key to Keyless Ignition Both Customer and Technician Can Be at Risk!

The transition from a key to an electronic code (Keyless Push Button Start) comes with a new set of challenges and safety measures that must be considered to prevent injury to the vehicle operator or the technician. Most view the fob as a key and that is not the case. It allows keyless entry to the vehicle and provides starting capability, but it does not play a role in shutting the vehicle down. Once started, the vehicle can be driven hundreds of miles without the presence of the fob. Just don't depress the Start/Stop button on your next stop. Let's consider some events that have created issues with the vehicle owner in safety, inconvenience and potential injury to the technician.

IDLE SHUT-DOWN

Her 2019 Tahoe would only idle for fifteen minutes and then shut down. She was concerned that her pets would overheat in the summer and get cold in the winter. There was good reason for this safety feature introduced by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). With the mentioned vehicle, the engine will idle for fifteen minutes before shutting down with the fob outside the vehicle and idle for one hour with the fob inside the vehicle. Some vehicle manufacturers extend this idle time up to thirty minutes regardless of the position of the fob. To save battery power the ignition is also turned off.

NHTSA introduced this legislation following deaths involving carbon monoxide poisoning. The absence of an ignition key that must be turned to the off position to kill the engine results in some operators exiting the vehicle with the engine still running. Imagine pulling into an enclosed garage. The engine is quiet, or the sound is masked from the garage door closing. They exit the vehicle and enter the home, not aware the engine is still running. Carbon monoxide seeps into the house and overcomes them, resulting in death or brain damage. The Auto/Remote Start feature, whereby the customer starts the vehicle from a distance with the fob, has resulted in the same tragedies, as they often forget the garage door is closed when starting the engine.

SAFEGUARDS

The system incorporates safeguards that prevent the engine from starting until the operator places the transmission in the park position and depresses the brake

pedal. However, some systems allow the operator to shut the engine down without placing the transmission in the park position. There should be an audible warning, but it is often not heard, possibly from background noise, or a hearing impairment. This can allow a roll-away crash causing personal injury, damage to the vehicle, or property damage. Vehicles that require an ignition key will not allow removal of the key until the transmission is placed in park.

SAFETY WHEN SERVICING

Imagine servicing or making repairs to a vehicle and suddenly the vehicle starts. There have been cases where this scenario has occurred, when the vehicle owner would mistakenly start the vehicle via the remote start feature using a phone app.

GM has notified their service technicians to take precautions when servicing their vehicles equipped with Remote Start or the OnStar mobile app. The technician can be injured, or vehicle damage can be incurred when repairs are being made in the engine compartment from the underside of the vehicle with the hood in the closed position. Imagine having your hands on a pulley or the serpentine belt when someone starts the engine.

GM advises that two scenarios could promote this sudden start condition:

- 1) The vehicle owner forgets that repairs are being made, and they start their vehicle using the remote start feature of the OnStar mobile app.
- 2) While in the service department, a technician accidentally remote starts the wrong vehicle due to a mix-up in key fobs. Many fobs share common characteristics, resulting in an accidental start-up of the wrong vehicle.

GM cautions that the hood should be fully opened, or opened to the second latch when performing any repairs in the engine compartment or under the vehicle, as this will disable the remote start feature via the key fob or OnStar mobile app.

To prevent personal injury, make certain you are familiar with the safety procedures of the vehicle being serviced.



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"WHAT DO YOU MEAN, 'YOU'RE AFRAID OF YOUR CAR?'"