

MotorWeek Transcripts

MotorNews '1st RESPONDER HYBRID TRAINING'

JESSICA SHEA CHOKSEY: Being the first to arrive at the scene of an accident is something we should all be prepared for. Calling for help, alerting oncoming traffic and rendering first aid are basic steps, but if that crash involves a hybrid-electric vehicle, then that accident scene should be approached with extra caution.

Hybrid-electric vehicles are as safe as conventional vehicles, but because of their high-voltage battery systems, accidents involving hybrids can pose an extra risk to the EMTs, police and firemen responding to the scene. That's why the National Alternative Fuels Training Consortium has developed a curriculum and training program for First Responders to safely identify and deal with hybrid-electric vehicles.

For instance, the most popular hybrid, Toyota's Prius, is among those that can run silently in battery mode – and since it uses a keyless remote, the car can remain powered up even when no key is visible. In this mode, pressing the throttle could cause the car to move unexpectedly, so immobilizing the car is important.

The NAFTC course offers hands-on, vehicle-specific training covering how to safely disconnect the high voltage power supply, how to deal with possible ruptured battery packs and how to safely extract drivers and passengers trapped inside these vehicles.

The training is offered at the NAFTC Morgantown, West Virginia headquarters and also through a network of 33 National Training Centers located at community colleges, tech schools and Universities nationwide.

If you're calling 9-1-1 about an accident and think a hybrid is involved, the safe move is to stay back, identify the vehicle as a hybrid and let the first responder know so they can be better prepared when they arrive. And that's it for this week's MotorNews.