

Wheels: Ron of Cincinnati writes by e-mail, “A fire fighter friend told me a danger with the hybrid cars on the market. He told me in a crash, the electric via the battery/charging system, can turn the car into one big electric circuit. Fire departments around the USA need special training on taking care in an accident and when they approach hybrids. Do you know if this is true? Something to let your readers know?”

Halderman: While your friend is right that most hybrid electric vehicles do have high-voltage batteries, this does not mean that they are a shock hazard. The high-voltage circuits are not connected to the body of the vehicle. In fact, the electronic controllers monitor the high-voltage circuits continuously and will open a system main relay (SMR) if any high voltage is detected on the body or frame of the vehicle. Therefore, if the vehicle were to become submerged in water or in a collision, the system main relays will immediately break the circuit and disable the high-voltage circuit. As an extra precaution, all high-voltage wiring is covered with orange protective plastic conduit.

