

COMPUTER NEWS from the



APRIL 2014

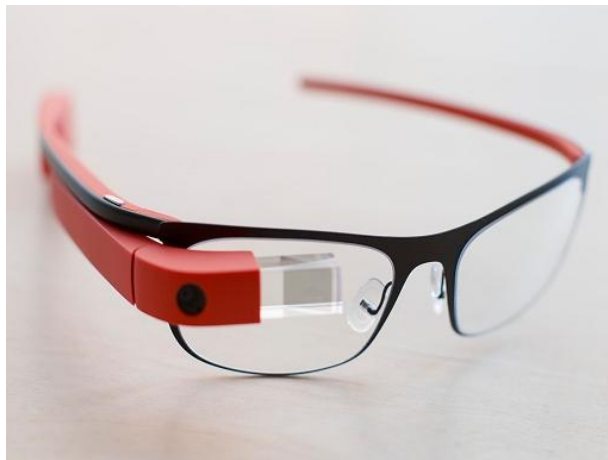
Volume 2 NO. 4

As found on the web and other sources

If you thought that cell phones were a distraction while driving just you wait!

Google Glass and Driving: Safe or Insane?

By Brandon Dimmel on February, 28 2014 in "Infopackets.com".



Should you be allowed to use high-tech Google Glass spectacles while driving? It's an ongoing debate, and now Google itself is finally weighing in on the issue.

Google Glass is a wearable technology that is connected to the Internet. In essence, it's like a hands-free smartphone in the shape of eyeglasses; it allows users to take high-definition (HD) pictures, record HD video, and instantly share recorded content with friends and family using various social Internet platforms, such as Google+, Facebook, and similar.

Among many other features, Google Glass also includes the ability for the wearer to plot a route. In essence, it's like wearing a global positioning system (GPS) device on your head. (Source: google.com)

Controversy Swirls Around 'Glassing' While Driving

The Google Glass GPS functionality seems ideal for heading out on the road. However, there's been a lot of controversy swirling around Google Glass and its use behind the wheel.

Shortly after Google Glass was unveiled, lawmakers in West Virginia openly discussed introducing legislation that would ban state residents from using the spectacles while driving. The issue has stalled for the time being, but those same lawmakers say the matter is hardly finished.

West Virginia is not alone in questioning the safety of 'Glassing' while driving. Several state governments and law enforcement agencies have expressed concern that using such an interactive device will hinder rather than help the act of piloting a vehicle.

In one notable case, a San Diego policeman issued a distracted driving ticket to a woman wearing Google Glass spectacles. The woman fought the measure and won her case because the policeman could not prove the spectacles were turned on when he issued the ticket.

Google Pressures Lawmakers to Dismiss Anti-Glass Driving Laws

Now, it appears Google is trying to make sure police are discouraged from ticketing Google Glass users in the future.

According to Illinois state senator Ira Silverstein, he's been visited by Google representatives hoping to prevent lawmakers from introducing legislation that restricts the use of Google Glass by motorists.

Google has acknowledged that it has entered into these kinds of discussions with lawmakers. In a recent statement, the firm suggested that officials simply need to realize that Google Glass won't distract drivers. In fact, Google suggests that using the device could actually help save lives.

"Technology issues are a big part of the current policy discussion in individual states," Google says. "We think it is important to be part of that discussion and to help policymakers understand new technologies including Glass."

They went on to note that "[Google] Glass is currently in the hands of a small group of Explorers, but we find that when people try it for themselves they realize that Glass is not meant to distract, but rather connect you more with the world around you."

Google Glass Makes Driving Safer, Says User

There are many people who agree that Google Glass does not distract.

Technology expert Chris Barrett recently told CNET that he used his Google Glass spectacles while driving for an astounding 2,500 miles. In the end, he felt sure that the hardware made driving safer. (Source: cnet.com)

"I know for a fact that Google Glass will save lives," Barrett said. He went on to suggest that Google may try to accommodate lawmakers' concerns by introducing a special "Google Glass Car Mode" that restricts access to more distracting applications.

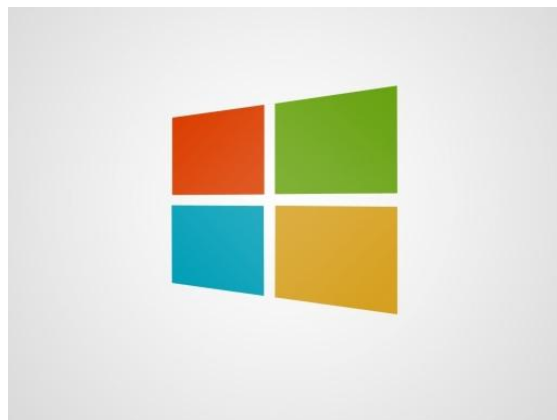
What's Your Opinion?

What do you think about Google Glass? Do you agree that Google Glass can make driving safer, or do you feel the exact opposite? What are the most serious concerns that you have about privacy when it comes to others wearing Google Glass? Lastly, is Google the right company to introduce this type of in-car technology, or would you prefer it come from an automotive firm, or does it matter either way?

Now something new for the Windows 8 bashers.

Windows 8 Update Makes Using Keyboard, Mouse Easier

By Brandon Dimmel on February, 25 2014 in INFOPACKETS.COM



Microsoft has announced that it plans to release its first major update for Windows 8.1 this spring, and it's called "Update 1". The biggest improvement, according to the firm, is that Windows 8.1 will become easier to use with a mouse and keyboard.

Microsoft's first significant update to Windows 8 was Windows 8.1, which was released last fall. Windows 8.1 Update 1 expands upon that, and has been rumored for a spring 2014 release for some time. To date, however, Microsoft has said very little about what's included in the package.

Windows 8.1 Update 1: Easier for Mouse, Keyboard Users

Now, Microsoft Windows Phone executive Joe Belfiore is offering some insight. Specifically, he says Windows 8.1 Update 1 will make life a whole lot easier for the many laptop and desktop users who didn't appreciate Windows 8's emphasis on touch technology.

"We are making improvements to the user interface that will naturally bridge touch and desktop, especially for our mouse and keyboard users," noted Belfiore.

"We have a number of targeted UI (User Interface) improvements that keep our highly satisfying touch experience intact, but that make the UI more familiar and more convenient for users with mouse [and] keyboard."

Belfiore went to say that Windows 8.1 users will "like how much more smooth and convenient these changes make mouse and keyboard use." (Source: pcpro.co.uk)

Price Cut Expected to Increase Windows 8.1 Installations

Microsoft is also drastically cutting the price of its Windows 8.1 licenses for manufacturers that build devices retailing for under \$250. It's expected the deal will increase the number of budget-priced Windows 8-based devices on the market and could ultimately cut the price of such items for consumers.

But, will it be enough to arouse more interest in Windows 8.1 or devices using that operating system?

Bloomberg news says the move will save manufacturers who build sub-\$250 devices up to 70 per cent, reducing the cost of a Windows 8.1 license from \$50 to just \$15. For companies that produce low-cost tablet computers and budget notebooks, experts say that's a significant cost savings.

PCWorld's Jon Phillips says it could result in manufacturers producing more budget-priced tablets and laptop computers, which is in turn good for the consumer.

Microsoft Continues to Battle Google Chrome

Perhaps most importantly, these changes will encourage manufacturers to install Windows 8.1 instead of Google's low-cost Chrome operating system, which can be found on a proliferating number of \$200 to \$250 "Chromebooks". (Source: pcworld.com)

For Microsoft, the emergence of Chrome-based devices, like the \$230 Samsung Chromebook 3, represents a major threat. Many consumers primarily interested in using their computer for simple tasks -- such as accessing the Internet and storage information in the "cloud" -- are now moving to low-priced notebooks, like the Chromebook 3.

It's believed that Microsoft's decision to slash the price of Windows 8.1 licenses could also help revive consumer interest in laptop computers. Currently, the PC industry is in a major slump, as more consumers ditch their notebooks and desktops in favor of high-power tablets, such as the recently unveiled 12.2-inch [Samsung NotePRO](#).

That said, the move is also designed to get consumers using Windows 8, which continues to struggle when compared to its predecessor, Windows 7. Microsoft's newest operating system has sold just 200 million copies since it was released in October 2012, while Windows 7 sold 240 million licenses in just a year. (Source: pcworld.com)

NO, NO it can't be. I will never give my Win XP up!

Windows XP enters month zero as Windows 8.1 update leaks

Ask not for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for XP

By [Chris Merriman](#) in "theInquirer.net".



ON THE SAME DAY that Microsoft's soon to be deprecated operating system Windows XP enters its final month of support, the firm has accidentally leaked the first update to Windows 8.1.

The finished version of the Windows 8.1 update has already been released to manufacturers (RTM), but an exploit was found that allowed users to download the update via Windows Update by simply changing a Windows 8.1 registry setting and rebooting.

The registry exploit has now been patched, but the update - which might or might not be the finished build - is circulating on filesharing websites, available to install at your own risk.

The Windows 8.1 update begins to [address some of the longstanding complaints](#) about Microsoft's flagship operating system with new features, including minimising and maximising Windows 8.1 apps to the desktop in an attempt to reduce the "bolted on" feel of Microsoft's Windows 8.1 Modern, or Metro, user interface.

Many of the changes in the Windows 8.1 update, which has yet to be released to the public, centre around [placating users that do not have touchscreens](#). Those users are still most of the company's Windows user base and many of them have found the gesture controls in Windows 8.1 rather fiddly.

As users continue to reject Windows 8.1, the 12 year old Windows XP operating system that [still holds nearly 30 percent of the market](#) has reached its last month of support. From tomorrow, [nag screens will begin to warn users that they must upgrade](#) - and give Microsoft more money - or risk being unprotected from security vulnerabilities.

It is estimated that 98 percent of the world's cash machines still use Windows XP, which could make withdrawing money after this time next month interesting.

Getting Personal: Siri, Google Now, and Cortana

From: “askbobrankin.com”.

Smartphone personal assistant apps are becoming more involved in our daily lives. They watch, listen, and then offer a variety of information that's supposed to make your life easier. But are they getting a bit TOO personal? Let's look at the offerings from Apple, Google, and some rumors about Microsoft's upcoming personal digital assistant app...



Is Your Personal Digital Assistant Too Helpful?

Back in the mid-1990s, Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) were a lot like butlers: helpful but passive, discreet and non-threatening. You could tell your Palm Pilot, 'Hold this address for me... Remind me of this appointment (or that birthday)' and it would just do as you told it, without doing anything more.

But today, PDAs are [smartphone apps](#), and sometimes they seem a bit too smart for comfort. Sure, they're more helpful than old-school PDAs.

When you store someone's birthday in a modern PDA app, the [app](#) may suggest appropriate presents. If you store a lunch appointment, the PDA may suggest restaurants near the site of the appointment. That's all right, but now PDAs are becoming kind of pushy, like the “Overly Attached Girlfriend” meme.



AskBobRankin.com

Instead of simply responding to your input, a PDA now tries to anticipate what you are going to want or need. To do that, the app must get to know you very, very well... better than you might like. It may track and record your movements so that, for instance, it knows when to give you a traffic report.

It may rifle through your emails and [text messages](#), searching for clues about your interests or current activities so it can scout the Internet to bring you information relevant to you. If you have

an appointment on your calendar, it'll tell you when its time to leave, and map out the best route based on current traffic conditions.

This sort of smothering and hovering may be OK with you; after all, it's nice to have a faithful servant anticipating your every need. Or you may be a bit creeped out by a [piece of software](#) that's actively probing your life and drawing inferences about what's on your mind.

Siri and Google Now

There are two major PDA apps in the [smartphone](#) arena right now - Apple's Siri and Android's Google Now. Siri runs only on iOS devices, while Google Now is available for Android or iOS. Microsoft is set to roll out a PDA for Windows Phone 8.1 this year; it probably won't run on any other operating system.

Siri debuted in the late 2000s; its developer was acquired by Apple in 2010. Voice-activated, Siri does its best to understand what you are asking of it and respond appropriately. It can be your intermediary between other apps, i.e., "Siri, call John for me," or "Siri, what appointments do I have today?" It can find places and provide driving directions on maps, although there have been a few infamous mistakes made. Siri can find and [play music](#) for you whether the tunes reside on your iOS device or online.

Google Now was first introduced in Android 4.1 ("Jellybean"). Like Siri, it interprets spoken commands like "Call Jane," "Set alarm for 6 AM," or "[Navigate](#) to Lincoln, Nebraska." (See this helpful list of [Google Now voice commands](#).) It also accepts typed input, which can avoid misunderstandings in voice-recognition. Google Now presents information you didn't request but might be interested in: sports scores, weather and traffic reports, sales and special offers at businesses you pass every day, and so on. The information shown to you is selected based on your past searches, movements (as revealed by GPS), email activity, and all else that Google knows about you, including who else you are associated with and what Google knows about them. Tidbits of "suggested information" are presented on pop-up "cards" which you can tap to display more details or swipe away to dismiss.

I have an Android phone, and have noticed that Google Now does some interesting, and usually help things. Recently, I had booked a flight, and it reminded me that it would soon be time to leave for the airport, and oh, did I want to bring up a [Google Map](#) for driving directions? A short while later, Google Now told me the flight was delayed. Google Now knows I'm interested in baseball, so it shows me stories about that topic. And during the regular season, it regularly informs me that the Mets lost yet another game after taking a 3-run lead into the 9th inning. Yes, it's poking into my calendar, my email and my recent web searches to do all that. But Google has all that info anyway, so it really doesn't bother me.

Microsoft's Cortana

Microsoft is late to the smart PDA game, but its first attempt is expected to debut this year. It's name or (code-name) is "Cortana," the name of a virtual character in the Microsoft game,

“Halo.” I'm betting on code-name. You can search Google for images of Cortana, and you'll see why. Oh, and there's the fact that Cortana goes insane due to information overload. But I digress...

Details on Cortana's capabilities are scarce, but she is expected to combine aspects of Siri and Google Now. Voice recognition, helpful reminders and suggestions, etc. Microsoft's former CEO spoke of Cortana as “advanced, almost magical, intelligence in our cloud that learns more and more over time about people and the world.” Did I mention that Cortana goes insane due to information overload?

Rumor has it that users will be able to specify or restrict what types information the Cortana app can access. It's also believed that Cortana will employ "passive listening," which means you won't have to specifically activate the app to enter voice commands. Like the Moto X phone, it will always be listening for your voice. You might find that convenient, or creepy. Hopefully there will be an on/off switch for that, too.

Microsoft has a checkered history when it comes to helpful avatars. Remember Clippy the paperclip? Microsoft Bob? Ms. Dewey? Let's hope they get it right with Cortana, or whatever they decide to call their personal digital helper-thingie.

Read more:

http://askbobrankin.com/getting_personal_siri_google_now_and_cortana.html#ixzz2vIqac79B

GETTING OLDER

A distraught senior citizen phoned her doctor's office.

"Is it true," she wanted to know, "that the medication you prescribed has to be taken for the rest of my life?"

"Yes, I'm afraid so," the doctor told her.

There was a moment of silence before the senior lady replied, "I'm wondering, then, just how serious is my condition because this prescription is marked

'NO REFILLS'."
