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California Pushes for Standardized EV Diagnostic Systems



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Monday, November 20, 2023

California Paves the Way: Standardized Diagnostic Systems for EVs Set to Revolutionize Repairs

In a significant leap toward simplifying electric vehicle (EV) diagnostics, California is taking the lead in proposing regulations that mandate the implementation of an industry-standard diagnostic system for EVs.

This groundbreaking move aims to address the current lack of uniformity in onboard diagnostic systems for EVs, ultimately making repairs and diagnostics more efficient and accessible.

The anticipated industry standard, set to debut in 2026 as part of California's Advanced Clean Cars II program, is poised to bring about a transformative change akin to the OBD-II system that revolutionized combustion-powered cars in the 1990s.



The Fragmented Landscape: EV Diagnostics Without a Standard

Unlike traditional gas-powered vehicles equipped with OBD-II systems, EVs currently lack a standardized diagnostic protocol. The absence of a universal system has led to a complex and fragmented landscape, where each EV model operates on a distinct diagnostic platform. This variation has made it challenging for technicians to conduct diagnostics consistently across different makes and models, hindering the efficiency of repairs and maintenance.

The need for standardization has become increasingly evident as EVs become more prevalent on our roads. Recognizing this, California is updating its standards through the Advanced Clean Cars II program to mitigate the challenges posed by proprietary diagnostic systems. The lack of a standardized system has created a "wild, wild West" scenario in vehicle testing, fault code retrieval, and the transmission of essential information required for effective repairs.

California's Proactive Approach: Setting the Standard for EV Diagnostics

The proposed regulations for EV diagnostics, set to come into effect for 2026 model vehicles, will require automakers to adopt a standard EV diagnostic system. This system, akin to the widely adopted OBD-II in traditional vehicles, is expected to cover all aspects of an EV's propulsion system. From the battery pack to power electronics, charging systems, and thermal systems, the new standard will provide comprehensive access to crucial diagnostic information for both dealerships and independent repair shops.

California's proactive approach positions the state as a potential industry standard for EV diagnostics, setting a precedent that could be adopted by other states. Seven out of the 17 states following California's emissions rules have already embraced the Advanced Clean Cars II regulations. Furthermore, these onboard diagnostic regulations will extend their reach to govern plug-in hybrid and fuel cell vehicles, fostering a more streamlined approach to diagnostics across diverse EV platforms.

While the exact details of the standardized diagnostic system are yet to be fully disclosed, the upcoming CARB regulations suggest a broad coverage, including the battery pack, power electronics, charging system, and thermal systems. This

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comprehensive approach ensures that technicians have access to all necessary information to diagnose and address issues effectively.

Connector Conundrum

One question that remains unanswered is whether the familiar 16-pin connector from OBD-II will continue to be used for EV diagnostics. Given its age, there is speculation about the potential need for an updated connector. However, the transition to a standardized OBD system for EVs involves more than just a universal port; it necessitates the development of common hardware and underlying systems capable of scanning and reporting faults across diverse EV models.

In conclusion, California's push for a standardized diagnostic system for EVs marks a pivotal moment in the evolution of electric vehicle technology. By addressing the current fragmentation in diagnostic protocols, these regulations have the potential to streamline repairs, enhance maintenance procedures, and establish a cohesive standard that could influence the broader EV industry. As the automotive landscape shifts towards electrification, the adoption of standardized diagnostic systems is a crucial step in ensuring the longevity and efficiency of electric vehicles on our roads.