Woman Fights Ticket for Driving with Google Glass

Justin Pricthard, Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A California woman pleaded not guilty Tuesday to what is believed to be the first traffic citation alleging a motorist was using Google's computer-in-an-eyeglass.

The device, known as Google Glass, features a thumbnail-size transparent display above the right eye.

The technology will not be made widely available to the public until 2014, but defendant Cecilia Abadie was one of about 10,000 "explorers" who received the glasses earlier this year as part of a tryout.

Her case touches several hot-button issues, including distracted driving, wearable technology that will one day become mainstream, and how laws often lag technological developments.

Abadie was pulled over in October on suspicion of going 80 mph in a 65 mph zone on a San Diego freeway. The California Highway Patrol officer saw she was wearing Google Glass and tacked on a citation usually given to people driving while a video or TV screen is on in the front of their vehicle.

Abadie, a software developer and tech true believer, pleaded not guilty to both charges in San Diego traffic court.

Her attorney William Concidine told The Associated Press that she will testify at a trial scheduled for January that the glasses were not on when she was driving, and

activated when she looked up at the officer as he stood by her window.

The device is designed to respond to a head tilt by waking itself up.

Concidine also said the vehicle code listed in the citation applies to video screens in vehicles and is not relevant to mobile technology such as Google Glass.

The CHP declined comment on Concidine's assertions.

"This has to play out in court," spokeswoman Fran Clader said.

At the time of Abadie's citation, the agency said anything which takes a driver's attention from the road is dangerous and should be discouraged.

The lightweight frames are equipped with a hidden camera and tiny display that responds to voice commands. The technology can be used to do things such as check email, learn background about something the wearer is looking at, or to get driving directions.

Legislators in at least three states — Delaware, New Jersey and West Virginia — have introduced bills that would specifically ban driving with Google Glass.

Chris Dale, a spokesman for the tech giant, said he was not aware of any other tickets issued for driving with Google Glass.

Google's website contains an advisory about using the headgear while driving: "Read up and follow the law. Above all, even when you're following the law, don't hurt yourself or others by failing to pay attention to the road."

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