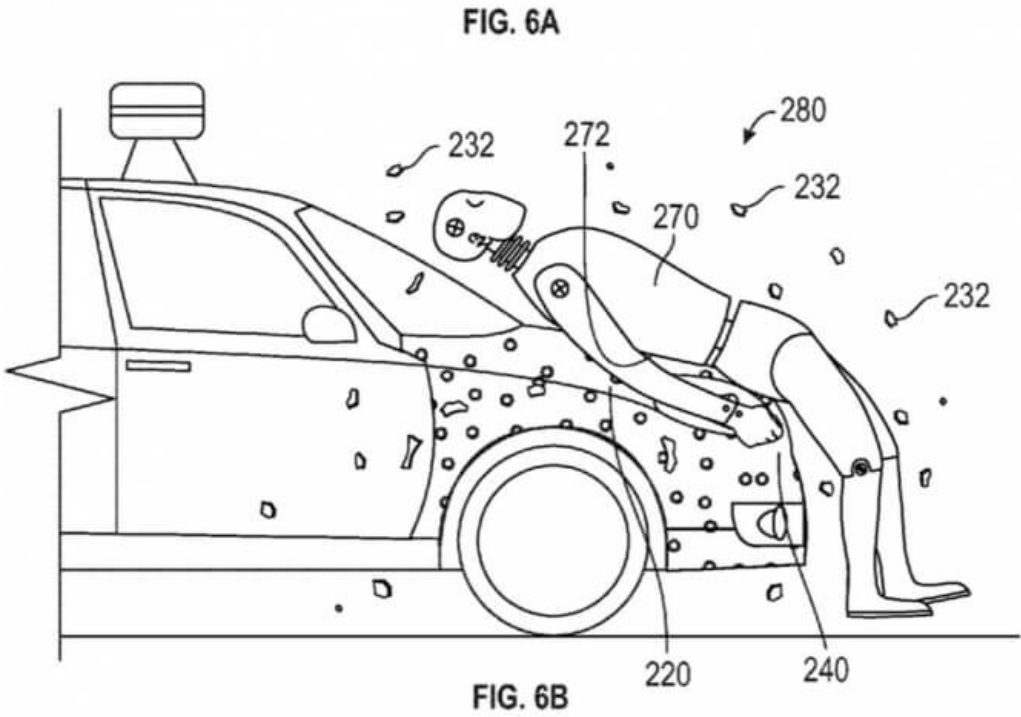


Google patent talk: How a sticky situation may protect a pedestrian

May 20 2016, by Nancy Owano



Credit: US Patent

What if? That is the nagging question surrounding self-driving cars which may be caught up in an accident and which may even take a pedestrian's life.

Certainly interest in technologies that help avert fatal accidents of all

types is not being ignored by the self-driving team at Google.

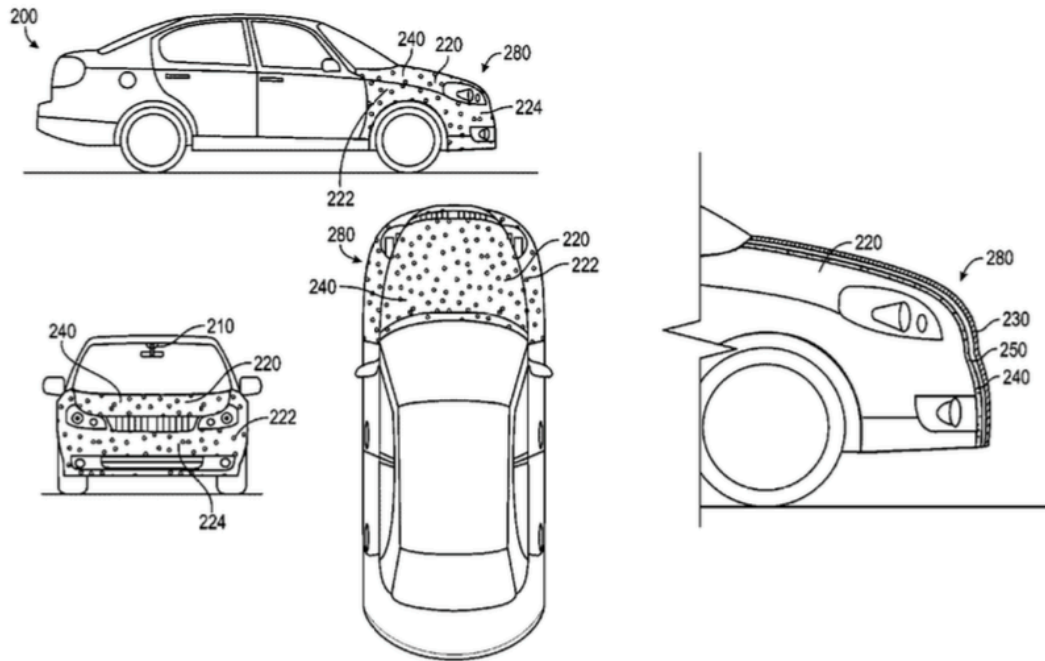
Consider this [patent application](#).

"Adhesive vehicle front end for mitigation of secondary pedestrian impact" is a patent application filed back in November 2014.

Inventors are Alex Khaykin and Daniel Lerner. Tech watchers this week were looking at the "sticky car" solution: If you hit a pedestrian the victim will stick to the car instead of bouncing off and hitting the pavement—never a happy ending. *CNET* explained that the sticky stuff would be exposed only upon impact in the case of an [accident](#).

Ethan Baron in *The Mercury News* said, "Think flypaper."

The patent Abstract description said this was "an adhesive layer positioned on the front end of the vehicle, a coating positioned over the adhesive layer, wherein, upon the initial impact between the colliding object and the vehicle, the coating is broken exposing the adhesive layer to adhere the colliding object to the adhesive layer during the initial impact."



Credit: US Patent

The patent also reads:

"The present application discloses embodiments that relate to a system for protecting a pedestrian during impact with a vehicle. The system includes an adhesive layer that is positioned on the hood, front bumper, and/or front side panels of the vehicle. A protective coating is positioned over the adhesive layer. Upon impact with a pedestrian, the coating is broken exposing the adhesive layer. The [adhesive bonds](#) the pedestrian to the vehicle so that the pedestrian remains with the vehicle until it stops, and is not thrown from the vehicle, thereby preventing a secondary impact between the pedestrian and the road surface or other object."

Baron made the observation that "The Google patent comes at a time of

rising pedestrian [traffic](#) fatalities, with preliminary data suggesting a 10 percent increase nationally last year from 4,884 deaths in 2014, according to the Governors Highway Safety Association. Distracted driving, and more cars on the roads, are probable factors behind the increase, said association spokeswoman Kara Macek."

Good idea or not?

The Mercury News carried some very interesting remarks about the patent idea from Stanford School of Law professor and autonomous car expert Bryant Walker Smith.

First, the compliments. "The idea that cars should be safe for people other than the ones in them is the next generation of automotive safety," Smith said. "The manufacturers have gotten remarkably good at protecting the occupants of the [vehicle](#), but there's been much less attention to protecting the people outside." Smith would applaud anyone thinking of the latter.

One important point to think about, nonetheless—the way some solutions might create new problems. "If you had a pedestrian stuck on a car that then crashed into something else, that could be worse than if the [pedestrian](#) was thrown to the side or thrown over the car. It could also be better. It's very dependent on the chaos of the situation," Smith said.

Nicky Woolf, a reporter for *Guardian US*, said, "It is not known whether Google has active plans to install the new technology on their [self-driving cars](#) in the [future](#)."

More information: [Adhesive vehicle front end for mitigation of secondary pedestrian impact](#), United States Patent, May 17, 2016.

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