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VEHICLE REMOTE START PREVENTION ALERT

Abstract

A motor vehicle includes at least one camera capturing images of an environment outside of the motor vehicle. A proximity sensor detects an object disposed adjacent to the motor vehicle. An electronic processor receives the images captured by the at least one camera, and receives a proximity signal from the proximity sensor. The proximity signal is indicative of whether an object is disposed adjacent to the motor vehicle. The electronic processor determines, based upon the images captured by the at least one camera and the proximity signal, whether the motor vehicle is disposed within an enclosure. The electronic processor receives an engine start request signal that has been wirelessly transmitted by a user. In response to receiving the engine start request signal, the electronic processor causes the engine start system to start an engine of the motor vehicle when the motor vehicle is not disposed within an enclosure.

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Background/Summary

CROSS-REFERENCED TO RELATED APPLICATIONS [0001] This application is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 18/426,410, filed on Jan. 30, 2024, which is currently under allowance, which is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 17/829,832, filed on Jun. 1, 2022, now U.S. Pat. No. 11,919,388, issued on Mar. 5, 2024, which is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 16/538,958, filed on Aug. 13, 2019, now U.S. Pat. No. 11,376,959, issued on Jul. 5, 2022, which is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 15/797,054, filed on Oct. 30, 2017, now U.S. Pat. No. 10,421,359, issued on Sep. 24, 2019, which claims benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 62/419,737, filed on Nov. 9, 2016, the disclosures of which are hereby incorporated by reference in their entireties for all purposes.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

[0002] The present invention relates to starting motor vehicles via remote control.

2. Description of the Related Art

[0003] When a user remotely starts his car, he may be unaware that the car is disposed within an enclosed space. When a vehicle's engine starts within an enclosed space, the space can fill with carbon monoxide, which can be harmful to the user.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0004] The invention may alert the user before an enclosed space in which a vehicle is disposed becomes filled with carbon monoxide due to the vehicle being remotely started. More particularly, the invention may provide a system within the vehicle that determines if the vehicle is within an enclosed space, such as a garage, and prevents the engine from being started remotely. The inventive system can utilize the vehicle's global positioning system (GPS), front facing camera, rear facing camera, and/or vehicle proximity sensors.

[0005] When the vehicle is within an enclosed space and detects that the user is trying to start the engine remotely, the vehicle alerts the user that the engine is being prevented from starting, perhaps also informing the user that the engine is being prevented from starting because the vehicle is in an enclosed space. The user may attempt to remotely start the vehicle by pressing a pushbutton on a key fob associated with the vehicle, for example. The alert may be in the form of a voice message or a text message, and may be communicated to the user via phone app, text alert, smart watch, or smart home system, for example. The alert may be displayed in text form on the user's television. The user can then remotely start the car anyway if he chooses to do so, or he may take some other action such as remotely open a garage door so that the space is no longer enclosed.

[0006] The invention comprises, in one form thereof, a motor vehicle including at least one camera capturing images of an environment outside of the motor vehicle. A proximity sensor detects an object disposed adjacent to the motor vehicle. An electronic processor is communicatively coupled to the at least one camera, to the proximity sensor, and to a vehicle engine start system. The electronic processor receives the images captured by the at least one camera, and receives a proximity signal from the proximity sensor. The proximity signal is indicative of whether an object is disposed adjacent to the motor vehicle. The electronic processor determines, based upon the images captured by the at least one camera and the proximity signal, whether the motor vehicle is disposed within an enclosure. The electronic processor receives an engine start request signal that has been wirelessly transmitted by a user. In response to receiving the engine start request signal, the electronic processor causes the engine start system to start an engine of the motor vehicle when the motor vehicle is not disposed within an enclosure. Alternatively, in response to receiving the engine start request signal, the electronic processor informs the user that the engine of the motor vehicle will not be started. The informing occurs when the motor vehicle is disposed within an enclosure.

[0007] The invention comprises, in another form thereof, a method of operating a motor vehicle, including capturing images of an environment outside of the motor vehicle. It is detected whether an object is disposed adjacent to the motor vehicle. It is determined, based upon the images captured by the at least one camera and based on the detecting step, whether the motor vehicle is disposed within an enclosure. An engine start request signal wirelessly transmitted by a user is received. In response to receiving the engine start request signal, an engine of the motor vehicle is started when the motor vehicle is not disposed within an enclosure. In response to receiving the engine start request signal, the user is informed that the engine of the motor vehicle will not be started. The informing occurs when the motor vehicle is disposed within an enclosure.

[0008] The invention comprises, in yet another form thereof, a motor vehicle including an electronic processor communicatively coupled to a global positioning system. The electronic processor receives geographical coordinates from the global positioning system, and determines, based upon the geographical coordinates, whether the motor vehicle is disposed within an enclosure. The electronic processor receives an engine start request signal wirelessly transmitted by a user. In response to receiving the engine start request signal, the electronic processor causes the engine start system to start an engine of the motor vehicle when the motor vehicle is not disposed within an enclosure. Alternatively, in response to receiving the engine start request signal, the electronic processor informs the user that the engine of the motor vehicle will not be started when the motor vehicle is disposed within an enclosure.

Description

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0009] The above-mentioned and other features and objects of this invention, and the manner of attaining them, will become more apparent and the invention itself will be better understood by reference to the following description of embodiments of the invention taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, wherein:

[0010] FIG. 1 is a block diagram of one embodiment of a vehicular remote starting arrangement of the present invention.

[0011] FIG. 2 is a flow chart of one embodiment of a method of the present invention for operating a motor vehicle.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0012] The embodiments hereinafter disclosed are not intended to be exhaustive or limit the invention to the precise forms disclosed in the following description. Rather the embodiments are

chosen and described so that others skilled in the art may utilize its teachings.

[0013] FIG. 1 illustrates one embodiment of a vehicular remote starting arrangement **10** of the present invention, including a key fob **12**, a motor vehicle **14**, and a wireless electronic communication device **16**. Key fob **12** includes a pushbutton **18** which, when depressed, causes antenna **20** of key fob **12** to transmit a wireless START ENGINE signal to vehicle **14**.

[0014] Vehicle **14** includes an antenna **22**, an electronic processor **24**, an engine start system **26**, a memory device **28**, a GPS module **30**, a plurality of proximity sensors **32**, rear view camera **34**, and a front view camera **36**. Antenna **22** enables processor **24** to receive the wireless START ENGINE signal from key fob **12**. Upon receiving the wireless START ENGINE signal, processor **24** determines whether vehicle **14** is within an enclosed space, such as a garage.

[0015] In order to determine whether vehicle **14** is within an enclosed space, processor **24** may analyze images captured by rear and front view cameras **34**, **36**, and signals from proximity sensors **32**. The images and proximity sensor signal may indicate whether vehicle **14** is surrounded by walls and a ceiling.

[0016] Alternatively, processor **24** may use the geographic coordinates of vehicle **14**, as received from GPS module **30**, to determine whether vehicle **14** is disposed within an enclosed space. Memory device **28** may include a lookup table which indicates which geographic coordinates correspond to an enclosed space. The lookup table may be customized for the particular vehicle, and for the enclosed spaces that the vehicle is regularly parked in. For example, if the images from cameras **34**, **36** and/or the proximity sensor signal indicate that vehicle **14** may be surrounded by walls and a ceiling, then processor **24** may textually or audibly ask the user to confirm that vehicle **14** is presently within an enclosed space. The driver's answers and corresponding geographic coordinates may be used to create a database within memory device **28** that lists which geographic coordinates do and do not correspond to enclosed spaces.

[0017] It is also possible for the database of enclosed spaces and corresponding geographic coordinates to be disposed remotely, communicated with wirelessly, and be shared by multiple users. Thus, if one user identifies a particular set of geographic coordinates as corresponding to a public garage, then future users do not have to repeat this confirmation that their vehicles are parked in the same garage.

[0018] Regardless of how processor **24** determines whether vehicle **14** is disposed within an enclosed space, if processor **24** receives the wireless START ENGINE signal from key fob **12** and determines that vehicle **14** is not disposed within an enclosed space, then processor **24** instructs engine start system **26** to start the engine (e.g., turn ON the ignition). However, if processor **24** receives the wireless START ENGINE signal from key fob **12** and determines that vehicle **14** is disposed within an enclosed space, then processor **24** may transmit via antenna **22** an ALERT signal to electronic device **16**.

[0019] Electronic device **16** may include an antenna **38** for receiving the ALERT signal from processor **24**. Electronic device **16** may be a smart watch, television, personal computer, or mobile telephone, for example. Upon receiving the ALERT signal from processor **24**, electronic device **16** may inform the user audibly and/or textually that vehicle **14** is in an enclosed space. If the user does nothing after receiving the ALERT signal, then vehicle **14** is not started. However, the user may override the ALERT signal and cause vehicle **14** to be started, even though vehicle **14** is in an enclosed space. For example, the user may override the ALERT signal by pressing and holding pushbutton **18** for some predetermined period of time, such as five seconds. In response to antenna **22** of vehicle **14** receiving such a wireless OVERRIDE signal from antenna **20** of key fob **12**, processor **24** may send a signal to engine start system **26**, causing engine start system **26** to start the engine of vehicle **14**.

[0020] FIG. 2 is a flow chart of one embodiment of a method **200** of the present invention for operating a motor vehicle. In a first step **202**, images of an environment outside of the motor vehicle are captured. For example, rear view camera **34** and front view camera **36** may capture

images of an environment surrounding vehicle **14**.

[0021] In a next step **204** it is detected whether an object is disposed adjacent to the motor vehicle. For example, proximity sensors **32** may indicate whether vehicle **14** is disposed adjacent to an object, such as a wall or a ceiling.

[0022] Next, in step **206**, it is determined, based upon the images captured by the at least one camera and the detecting step, whether the motor vehicle is disposed within an enclosure. For example, processor **24** may analyze images captured by rear and front view cameras **34**, **36**, and signals from proximity sensors **32**. The images and proximity sensor signal may indicate whether vehicle **14** is surrounded by walls and a ceiling.

[0023] In step **208**, an engine start request signal wirelessly transmitted by a user is received. For example, key fob **12** includes a pushbutton **18** which, when depressed, causes antenna **20** of key fob **12** to transmit a wireless START ENGINE signal, which is received by vehicle **14** via antenna **22**.

[0024] In a final step **210**, in response to receiving the engine start request signal, an engine of the motor vehicle is caused to start if the motor vehicle is not disposed within an enclosure, and the user is informed that the engine of the motor vehicle will not be started if the motor vehicle is disposed within an enclosure. For example, processor **24**, in response to receiving the wireless START ENGINE signal, may cause engine start system **26** to start the vehicle's engine if it was determined in step **206** that vehicle **14** is not within an enclosure. Conversely, if it was determined in step **206** that vehicle **14** is indeed within an enclosure, then processor **24** may transmit a wireless signal to electronic device **16** informing the user that the engine of the motor vehicle will not be started.

[0025] While this invention has been described as having an exemplary design, the present invention may be further modified within the spirit and scope of this disclosure. This application is therefore intended to cover any variations, uses, or adaptations of the invention using its general principles. Further, this application is intended to cover such departures from the present disclosure as come within known or customary practice in the art to which this invention pertains.

Claims

1. A motor vehicle, comprising: a global positioning system; an engine start system; and an electronic processor communicatively coupled to the global positioning system, the electronic processor being configured to: receive geographical coordinates from the global positioning system; determine, based upon the geographical coordinates, that the motor vehicle is disposed within an enclosure; receive an engine start request signal wirelessly transmitted by a user when the motor vehicle is disposed within an enclosure; and in response to receiving the engine start request signal, inform the user that the engine of the motor vehicle is not being started because the motor vehicle is disposed within an enclosure.
2. The motor vehicle of claim 1, wherein the electronic processor is configured to: receive an override request signal from the user after informing the user that the engine of the motor vehicle is not being started; and in response to receiving the override request signal from the user, cause the engine start system to start the engine of the motor vehicle.
3. The motor vehicle of claim 1, wherein the global positioning system is configured to produce geographical coordinates while an ignition of the motor vehicle is OFF.
4. The motor vehicle of claim 1, wherein the electronic processor is configured to, in response to receiving the engine start request signal when the motor vehicle is disposed within an enclosure, inform the user that the engine of the motor vehicle is not be started by causing a wireless signal to be transmitted to an electronic device that did not cause the engine start request signal to be wirelessly transmitted.
5. The motor vehicle of claim 1, further comprising a memory device storing a database of

geographical coordinates corresponding to enclosed spaces, the electronic processor being configured to determine whether the motor vehicle is disposed within an enclosure based upon data retrieved from the database.

6. The motor vehicle of claim 1, further comprising at least one camera configured to capture images of an environment outside of the motor vehicle, wherein the electronic processor is configured to determine whether the motor vehicle is disposed within an enclosure based further upon the captured images.

7. The motor vehicle of claim 1, further comprising a proximity sensor configured to detect an object disposed adjacent to the motor vehicle, wherein the electronic processor is configured to determine whether the motor vehicle is disposed within an enclosure based further upon a proximity signal from the proximity sensor.

8. A method of operating a motor vehicle, the method comprising: receive geographical coordinates from a global positioning system; determine, based upon the geographical coordinates, that the motor vehicle is disposed within an enclosure; receive an engine start request signal wirelessly transmitted by a user when the motor vehicle is disposed within an enclosure; and in response to receiving the engine start request signal, inform the user that the engine of the motor vehicle is not being started because the motor vehicle is disposed within an enclosure.

9. The method of claim 8, further comprising: receiving an override request signal from the user after informing the user that the engine of the motor vehicle is not being started; and in response to receiving the override request signal from the user, causing the engine start system to start the engine of the motor vehicle.

10. The method of claim 8, wherein the step of receiving geographical coordinates from a global positioning system occurs in the motor vehicle while an ignition of the motor vehicle is OFF.

11. The method of claim 8, further comprising, in response to receiving the engine start request signal when the motor vehicle is disposed within an enclosure, informing the user that the engine of the motor vehicle is not being started by causing a wireless signal to be transmitted to an electronic device that did not cause the engine start request signal to be wirelessly transmitted.

12. The method of claim 8, further comprising: storing a database of geographical coordinates corresponding to enclosed spaces in a memory device of the motor vehicle; and determining whether the motor vehicle is disposed within an enclosure based upon data retrieved from the database.

13. The method of claim 8, further comprising: capturing images of an environment outside of the motor vehicle; and determining whether the motor vehicle is disposed within an enclosure based further upon the captured images.

14. A motor vehicle, comprising: a global positioning system; an engine start system; and an electronic processor communicatively coupled to the global positioning system, the electronic processor being configured to: receive geographical coordinates from the global positioning system; determine, based upon the geographical coordinates, whether the motor vehicle is disposed within an enclosure; receive an engine start request signal wirelessly transmitted by a user; and in response to receiving the engine start request signal: cause the engine start system to start an engine of the motor vehicle when the motor vehicle is not disposed within an enclosure; and inform the user that the engine of the motor vehicle will not be started, the informing occurring when the motor vehicle is disposed within an enclosure.

15. The motor vehicle of claim 14, wherein the electronic processor is configured to: receive an override signal from the user after informing the user that the engine of the motor vehicle will not be started; and in response to receiving the override signal from the user, cause the engine start system to start the engine of the motor vehicle.

16. The motor vehicle of claim 14, wherein the global positioning system is configured to produce geographical coordinates while an ignition of the motor vehicle is OFF.

17. The motor vehicle of claim 14, wherein the electronic processor is configured to, in response to

receiving the engine start request signal when the motor vehicle is disposed within an enclosure, inform the user that the engine of the motor vehicle will not be started by causing a wireless signal to be transmitted to an electronic device that did not cause the engine start request signal to be wirelessly transmitted.

18. The motor vehicle of claim 14, further comprising a memory device storing a database of geographical coordinates corresponding to enclosed spaces, the electronic processor being configured to determine whether the motor vehicle is disposed within an enclosure based upon data retrieved from the database.

19. The motor vehicle of claim 14, further comprising at least one camera configured to capture images of an environment outside of the motor vehicle, wherein the electronic processor is configured to determine whether the motor vehicle is disposed within an enclosure based further upon the captured images.

20. The motor vehicle of claim 14, further comprising a proximity sensor configured to detect an object disposed adjacent to the motor vehicle, wherein the electronic processor is configured to determine whether the motor vehicle is disposed within an enclosure based further upon a proximity signal from the proximity sensor.
