

## **Car Hacking and Terrorism: What Laws Apply?**

Today's cars are computers on wheels and are subject to hacking and infection by malware. The legal implications of this technical vulnerability have yet to be adequately addressed, according to the attorneys at Balough Law Offices, LLC.

Today's cars are controlled by complex computer systems, which include millions of lines of code connected by internal networks. These computer systems can be hacked, Cheryl Dancey Balough and Richard C. Balough noted in an article appearing in the current issue of Business Law Today published by the American Bar Assn. entitled ["Cyberterrorism on Wheels: Are Today's Cars Vulnerable to Attack?"](#)

"Car manufacturers are rushing to add new Wi-Fi functions as selling points," the article states. "These systems use mobile phone voice and data communication, in conjunction with GPS technology, to give drivers hands-free remote access to emergency services, vehicle diagnostics, directions, and e-mail access. These services continue to evolve and now enable security measures such as remote ignition block and remote deceleration of a stolen vehicle."

Computer scientists have demonstrated the ability to hack into such systems, transmit commands to vehicles, and surreptitiously listen to interior vehicle conversations. Future technology such as vehicle-to-vehicle and self-driving cars add to the vulnerability, the Baloughs wrote.

"Until industry-wide standards are adopted and implemented, cars, their owners, and their passengers remain vulnerable, creating liability concerns for the automotive industry," the article found. "Legislatures and judges also will need to examine how today's laws apply to damages caused when hackers or terrorists exploit these vulnerabilities."

The article discusses how current laws such as the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act, the Digital Millennium Copyright Act, the Wiretap Act, the PATRIOT Act, and traditional theories such as trespass to chattel could apply to car hacking and cyberterrorism on wheels.