

New Technology: Friend or Foe?
Nissan I-Key
2007 Nissan Altima and Infiniti G35

Some of today's automotive "smart keys" contain a glitch that can result in the unit becoming de-programmed and unable to start the car. The simple act of carrying a cell phone along with car keys could leave some AAA/CAA members stranded at the roadside.

Nissan North America is asking drivers of two of their most popular models (Nissan Altima and Infiniti G35 sedans) to avoid carrying their car keys and cell phones within close proximity to each other. Kyle Bazemore, a spokesman for Nissan, said: "We discovered that if the I-Key touches a cell phone, outgoing or incoming calls have the potential to alter the electronic code inside the I-Key." The electronic code is very sensitive and may be corrupted if it comes within an inch of an operating cell phone.

The I-Key is a wireless "smart key," which allows vehicle owners to enter and start their cars without having to insert a key into doors or the ignition system. As long as the I-Key is in close proximity to the owner's vehicle (i.e. in the owner's pocket or purse) all of the vehicle's functions should work without the owner ever having to use the key. Unfortunately, if the I-Key code is altered, it becomes disabled and cannot be reprogrammed or repaired.

A viable road-side solution does not exist for this problem. The only remedy is to tow the vehicle to a local Nissan or Infiniti dealership and obtain a new I-Key. According to Nissan North America, the problem has only occurred in a "very small percentage" of vehicles and a new version of the I-Key that can tolerate cell phone calls is now available.

According to the latest information received by AAA, no recall is planned for the earlier design I-Key units.

Source: Nissan North America Technical Bulletin