



↑ Béla Barényi

Béla Barényi (1907–1997), long-standing Mercedes designer and inventor of the crumple zone, is regarded as the most important pioneer of passive safety in car-making. In 1994 he was included in the “Automotive Hall of Fame” in Detroit as one of the outstanding personalities in automotive history.

Barényi applied for a job at Daimler-Benz in 1938. His talent was recognised

and his services engaged as a creative thinker. Free from the restraints of series development, he was able to pursue his own ideas, resulting in the course of his productive life in around 2,500 patents. His inventions ensured that the Mercedes-Benz marque became a synonym for safe driving, as it is today. Well known features including the non-deforming passenger compartment with crumple

The inventor of the crumple zone

← 1939 – beginnings of passenger car safety by Béla Barényi



↑ 1970 – first generation of ABS

zones, the “concealed windshield wipers” under the radiator hood, the pedestrian-friendly rounded nose section, the wedge-pin door lock and the safety steering column are practically standard on all cars today.

What is less well known is Barényi’s substantial contribution to the origination of the subsequent VW Beetle. Its basic concept was derived from a design that he

had submitted to Porsche in 1932 during a job interview. However, instead of the safety steering column envisaged by Barényi, the original Beetle was equipped with the rigid “steering skewer”.