Nobody seething with rage should get behind the wheel of a car, but how could they be stopped? In the future, the car itself may be able to make that call.

EPFL's Signal Processing Laboratory is collaborating with PSA Peugeot Citroën to develop a special infrared camera that will be aimed at a driver's face.

"The goal," the researchers explain on their project site, "is to develop a software framework that supports realtime face tracking and that will enable a series of applications on top of it, such as fatigue detection."

If successful, the car could essentially read what's going on in your mind and adjust settings to help ensure your safety.

What can the camera do so far?
"The researchers say they can read facial expressions and identify which of the seven universal emotions a person is feeling: fear, anger, joy, sadness, disgust, surprise, or suspicion," KurzweilAI reports.

They're still working on recognizing things like irritation and distraction, and developing a fatigue detector that would work by tracking how open your eyes are.

If the camera picked up on anger, for example, the car could be prompted to play soft music, while "detecting fatigue could lead to launching energetic music or more aggressive lighting of the dashboard," one of the researchers told KurzweilAI.

The car of the future

Volvo, meanwhile, is working on a dashboard-mounted sensor that would monitor driver alertness and attention. The system could respond by adjusting the lights or making sure the car doesn't stray out of its lane.

Volvo calls the technology "driver state estimation," and it has already been installed in some test vehicles. But if you cede control to a machine, will "being in the driver's seat" soon be irrelevant?

"This will enable the driver to rely a bit more on their car, and know that it will help them when needed," Per Landfors, an engineer at Volvo Cars explained in a statement.

Eventually, all cars may be driverless. But until then, such futuristic technology could help keep drivers safer.

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