

New Mazda cars will stop if driver suffers health problem

November 4 2021, by Yuri Kageyama



This photo provided by Mazda Motor Corp., shows the Mazda Co-Pilot Concept car in Miyoshi, Hiroshima prefecture, western Japan, on Sept. 30, 2021. Cars already know how to park themselves, warn drowsy drivers, steer back into the right lanes and propose map routes to destinations. The cars Mazda has in the works for next year in Japan know when drivers have a stroke or heart attack. Credit: Mazda Motor Corp. via AP

Cars already know how to park themselves, warn drowsy drivers, steer

back into the right lanes and propose map routes to destinations. The cars Mazda has in the works for next year in Japan know when drivers have a stroke or heart attack.

By 2025, the cars will even know when [drivers](#) are about to have a sudden health problem and warn them, according to the Japanese automaker.

What's involved are data from cameras inside the car, without resorting to laser sensors or other more obtrusive [technology](#). And it's going to be offered in affordable models, not just luxury vehicles. The technology holds promise for one of the most advanced aging societies in the world.

Mazda told reporters recently it has been working with [medical experts](#), including Tsukuba University Hospital, researching the collected image data to figure out what a healthy driver looks like, as opposed to an incapacitated driver, suddenly slumped forward over the [steering wheel](#).

Once recognizing a problem, Co-Pilot Concept, which has yet to have an official name, will bring that car to a stop in a safe spot, such as the curb of the road, as quickly as possible.

The car will be honking, with blinker and hazard lights flashing, according to Mazda, although the exact warning signals are still undecided. An [emergency call](#) to the ambulance and police will also get relayed.



This image provided by Mazda Motor Corp., shows that the Mazda Co-Pilot Concept car flashes hazard lights on and off, after a mock driver has undergone a sudden health problem, and will come to a safe stop, in Miyoshi, Hiroshima prefecture, Japan on Sept. 30, 2021. Vehicles with the Mazda Co-Pilot Concept will warn drivers around them with hazard lamps and horns that the driver has undergone a sudden health problem. Credit: Mazda Motor Corp. via AP

Other major automakers, including Volkswagen of Germany and Japanese rival Toyota Motor Corp., are working on similar technology.

Mazda plans to offer the technology in Europe after Japan. Mazda wants to wait and see before offering it in the U.S., because it believes questions remain about their social acceptance, although similar systems that stop vehicles are already being offered by rivals.



This image provided by Mazda Motor Corp., shows the dashboard of the Mazda Co-Pilot Concept car in Miyoshi, Hiroshima prefecture, Japan on Sept. 30, 2021. Cameras that are part of the Mazda Co-Pilot Concept will know through the image data that the driver has had a sudden health problem. The words at bottom read " (The vehicle) gradually slows down without impeding the flow of traffic." A rendering, left, shows an enlarged monitor on the dashboard. Credit: Mazda Motor Corp. via AP

As for [privacy concerns](#), the personal data does not leave the car, according to Mazda.

Takahiro Tochioka, the engineer in charge, said Mazda is working on ways to predict a health problem that may be coming even if the driver may not be conscious of it.

What the car will be looking for are the ways people focus their vision,

the swaying of their heads, slight aberrations in driving habits and other subtle changes, he said.



This combination of images provided by Mazda Motor Corp., shows a mock driver dozing off, left, and becoming incapacitated, right, in the automaker's Co-Pilot Concept car in Miyoshi, Hiroshima prefecture, on Sept. 30, 2021. The vehicle with the Mazda Co-Pilot Concept, when sensing that the driver has had a sudden health problem, will come to a stop finding a safe place as quickly as possible. Credit: Mazda Motor Corp. via AP

"And it will warn drivers even before actual symptoms appear," he told reporters proudly.

"But understanding and cooperation from the drivers around that car is crucial for this technology to work."

Mazda is hoping the Japanese public will see a driver in distress and help them, since an assumption of widespread public goodwill is characteristic of Japan.

The technology will empower people to keep driving through their lifetime, and will help reassure families and friends not to be worried, Tochioka said. Offering Co-Pilot will also allow Mazda to get feedback from real-life users, he said.

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Citation: New Mazda cars will stop if driver suffers health problem (2021, November 4)
retrieved 26 April 2024 from

<https://techxplore.com/news/2021-11-mazda-cars-driver-health-problem.html>

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