

Tesla is working on a sensor that can detect a child left behind in a hot car

Tesla is working on a new motion-detection sensor that could detect a child left behind in a hot car. According to *Reuters*, the company is seeking approval from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to market the technology, which would use unlicensed millimeter-wave radar sensors designed to operate at higher power levels than allowed under existing rules.

In its application, Tesla said the device could be used to “reduce the risk of pediatric vehicular heatstroke, protect vehicle occupants from injury through advanced airbag deployment and seatbelt reminders, and enhance theft prevention systems.”

“reduce the risk of pediatric vehicular heatstroke”

Tesla envisions using radar imaging to measure body size so it can tell the difference between adults and children. This can help the car “optimize airbag deployment in a crash – more effectively than existing weight based, in-seat sensor systems,” the company explains.

Tesla cites National Highway Traffic Safety Administration data that found “more than 50” children died of heatstroke in a car in 2018 and 2019, mostly because someone forgot them there. The FCC is seeking public comment on Tesla’s request through September 21st.

It’s unclear how and when such sensors could end up in Tesla’s vehicles. A spokesperson for the company did not respond to a

request for comment.

Tesla already utilizes the interior and exterior sensors on its vehicles for a variety of safety measures. Dog Mode keeps the car at a comfortable temperature for owners who need to leave their pets behind for a few minutes, and it'll use the jumbo display at the center to show a message for passersby that you'll be returning soon. Sentry Mode, the other hand, essentially lets the car guard itself using its exterior cameras to monitor nearby movement and identify potential threats.

Other automakers have introduced technological upgrades over the last few years to help reduce the number of children left behind in hot cars. In 2018, Nissan included sensors in its Pathfinder SUVs to detect when the rear door is opened before a trip. If the driver neglects to open the rear door again after the car is parked, the horn will beep several times as a reminder. Likewise, GM has installed a feature called Rear Seat Reminder in a host of its models that sounds a chime and displays a message on the instrument panel to remind drivers to check behind them.

The inclusion of an in-car sensor by Tesla is noteworthy because the company has resisted calls to add an active driver-monitoring system to supplement Autopilot, its advance driver assistance system. Engineers at Tesla wanted to add robust driver monitoring systems, but the company executives, including CEO Elon Musk, reportedly rejected the idea out of concern the options might not work well enough, could be expensive, and because drivers might become annoyed by an overly nagging system.

<https://www.theverge.com/2020/8/20/21377981/tesla-radar-sensor-child-hot-car-fcc>