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SafeDrive: Fog Detection and Accident Prevention in Adverse Weather

Group - 33

Kriti Raj	2101066CS
Abhijeet Kulshrestha	2101144CS
Shrijal	2101097ME
Aman Raj	2101214EC
Yata Rupesh	2101095EC

Submitted To

Dr. Om Prakash Singh

Dr. Chetan Bharde

Dr. Sunil Kumar Singh

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1. Introduction

Foggy weather conditions pose a significant threat to road safety, drastically reducing visibility and leading to a high incidence of accidents. Fog-related accidents are particularly alarming during the winter months when foggy conditions are more common. The core challenge lies in the fact that drivers often remain unaware of accidents that have occurred ahead, creating a hazardous scenario where subsequent vehicles pile up, exacerbating the impact and multiplying the risks. This lack of awareness results in a domino effect, leading to a chain reaction of accidents until the fog clears, leaving a trail of wreckage and, all too often, devastating consequences.

A recent news article from November 2023 reported a multi-vehicle pile-up on a highway in California due to dense fog. The accident involved over 20 vehicles and resulted in several injuries. Witnesses reported that the fog was so thick that it was impossible to see more than a few feet ahead. The accident occurred when the lead vehicle crashed into a guardrail, and subsequent vehicles were unable to stop in time due to the low visibility.

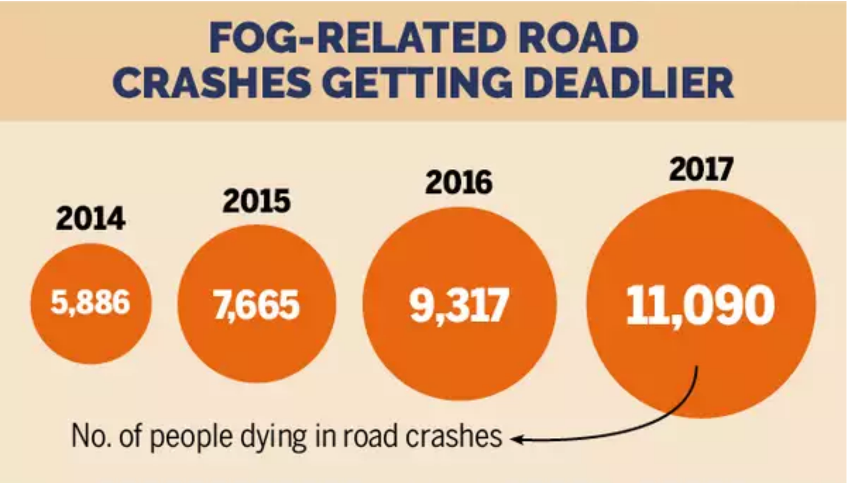
1.1 Abstract

This project addresses the critical issue of fog-related accidents by employing an innovative approach: a sensor array designed to detect vehicles in foggy weather conditions. Utilizing AI, including YOLO v8 object detection, our system aims to provide real-time awareness to drivers, effectively preventing accidents through timely warnings and automated slowing down of vehicles. The system not only detects nearby vehicles but also sends alerts to the driver, nearby hospitals, relatives, and emergency services in the unfortunate event of an accident, ensuring swift response and potentially saving lives.

1.2 Background

The selection of this problem statement is deeply rooted in the alarming statistics of fog-related accidents. According to the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), over 38,700 crashes annually are fog-related, resulting in over 600 fatalities and over 16,300 injuries. Fog-related accidents are often more severe than other types of accidents, as drivers have less time to react.

The fundamental challenge lies in the absence of a reliable system that can detect vehicles in dense fog and communicate this information effectively to other drivers. Existing solutions are often inadequate, leaving a considerable gap in road safety measures. The problem is exacerbated due to the lack of awareness about accidents ahead, making it impossible for drivers to take preventive actions, leading to a high incidence of fog-related accidents.



1.3 Objective

The primary objective of this project is to design and implement a sensor array integrated with YOLO v8 object detection, enabling real-time detection of vehicles in foggy weather. The system aims to:

- **Detect Vehicles:** Implement YOLO v8 object detection to identify cars in foggy conditions accurately.
- **Alert Drivers:** Provide timely warnings to drivers about the presence of vehicles or accidents ahead, enabling them to slow down or change lanes.
- **Emergency Response:** In case of an accident, send automated alerts to nearby hospitals, relatives of the involved parties, and emergency services, ensuring rapid response and potentially saving lives.

This project strives to bridge the gap in fog-related road safety by leveraging cutting-edge technology to create a proactive, real-time awareness system, thereby preventing accidents and minimizing the risks associated with foggy weather conditions.

1.4 Summary

Fog-related accidents are a serious threat to road safety, accounting for a significant number of fatalities and injuries each year. The lack of real-time awareness about accidents ahead is a major contributing factor to this problem. This research addresses this issue by developing a sensor array integrated with YOLO v8 object detection to enable real-time detection of vehicles in foggy weather. The system aims to alert drivers about the presence of vehicles or accidents ahead and send automated alerts to emergency services in case of an accident. This research has the potential to significantly improve road safety in foggy weather conditions.

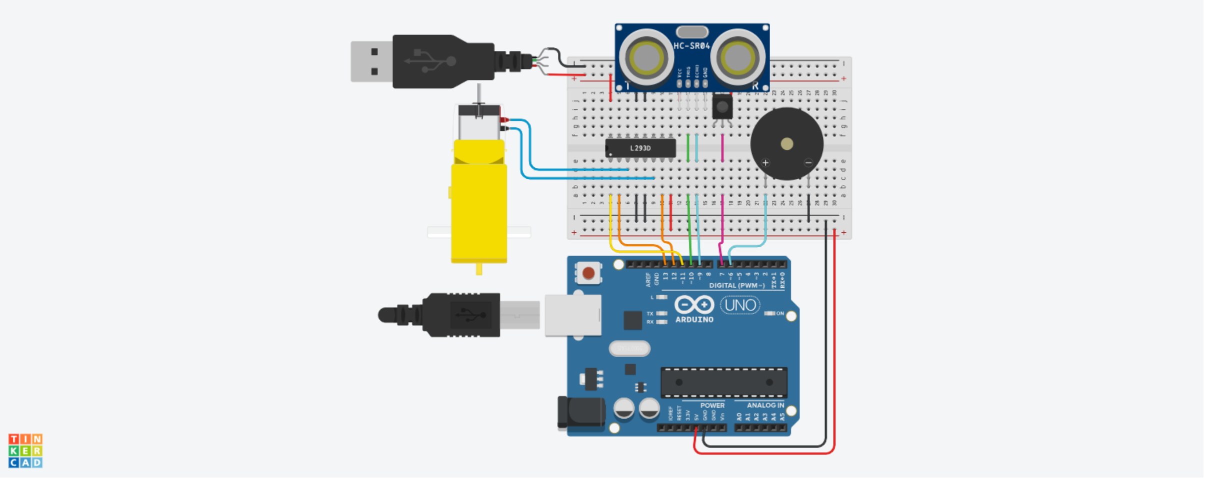
2. Methodology

The methodology leverages a sensor array and advanced object detection techniques for vehicle awareness and safety, especially in challenging conditions like fog. Object detection is powered by the YOLO v8 framework from Ultralytics, known for its real-time and accurate object recognition capabilities. The YOLO model is trained on a comprehensive dataset sourced from Kaggle. The training environment is set up using Miniconda for efficient model development and experimentation.

2.1 Sensor Array

The sensor array comprises an ultrasonic distance sensor, a blink sensor, and a buzzer. These sensors enable real-time data acquisition, providing crucial information about the vehicle's surroundings.

- **Ultrasonic Distance Sensor:** This sensor measures distances using ultrasonic waves, ensuring accurate readings even in foggy weather where visibility is severely limited. It helps in detecting the proximity of other vehicles, triggering alerts if they approach too closely.
- **Blink Sensor and Buzzer:** The blink sensor monitors the driver's eyelid movements. If the driver fails to open their eyelids within a specific timeframe, the buzzer activates, alerting the driver to stay awake and focused.



2.2 Object Detection in Foggy Weather

Our object detection methodology revolves around YOLO v8, a highly efficient deep learning architecture. By training this model on a diverse and extensive dataset gathered from Kaggle, our system learns to identify vehicles and other objects with remarkable accuracy. The training process involves Miniconda, a lightweight yet powerful package manager and virtual environment solution. Miniconda provides an isolated and controlled environment, streamlining the training process and ensuring optimal utilization of system resources.

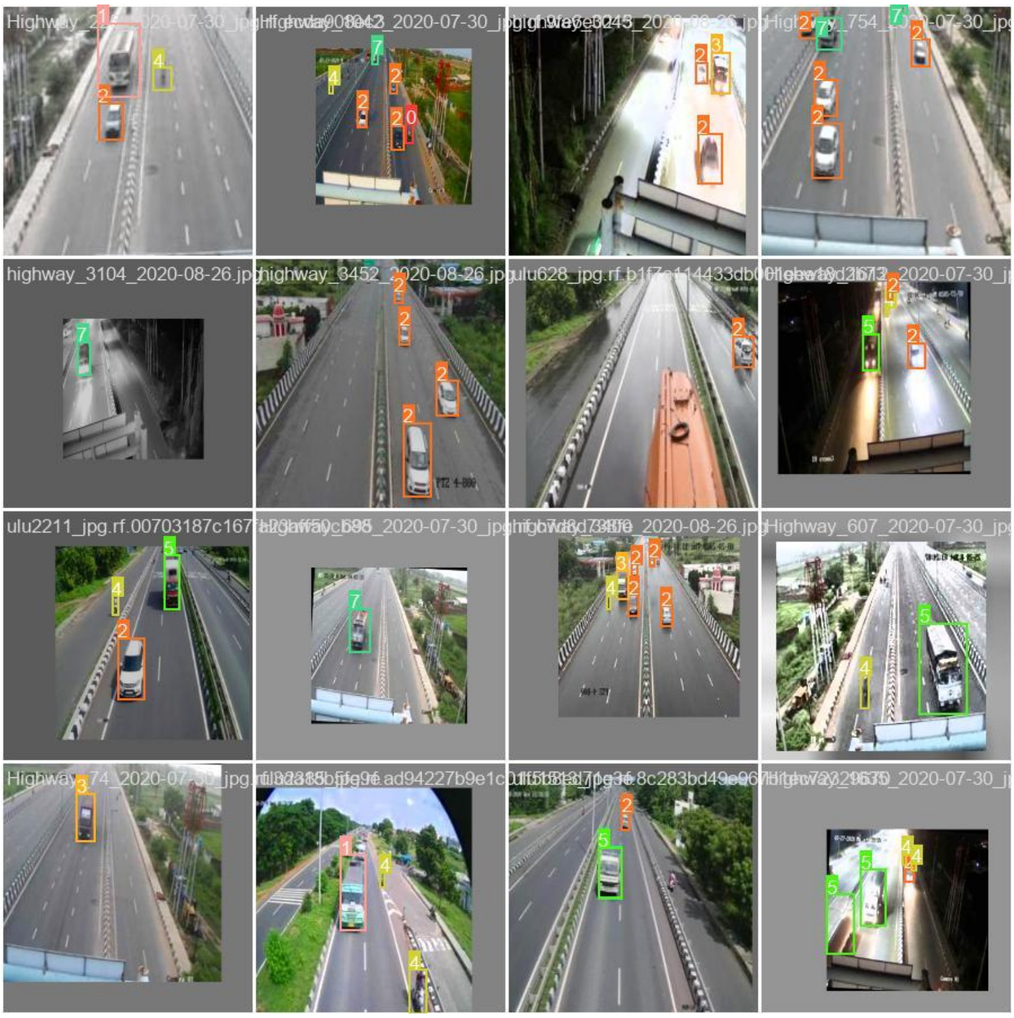
Data Preprocessing:

The dataset is organized into training, testing, and validation sets. Images are resized to a standardized format (224x224) to ensure consistency during processing. Labels associated with the images are prepared for training the object detection models.

Model Training and Evaluation:

The YOLO (You Only Look Once) object detection model is used, initialized with pre-trained weights. The model is trained on the preprocessed data for a specified number of epochs, allowing it to learn to detect vehicles effectively.

The trained model is tested on the test dataset, generating predictions for evaluation. Random samples of predictions are displayed, showcasing the model's detection capabilities in various foggy scenarios.



2.3 System Operation

The sensor array continuously collects data about the vehicle's surroundings. The microcontroller processes the sensor data and triggers appropriate responses, such as activating the buzzer if the driver blinks too slowly. YOLO v8 infers the presence of vehicles and other objects in the input image frames. If a vehicle is detected, the system alerts the driver through visual and/or audible cues.

3. Challenges and Future Improvements

The challenges faced by existing automotive safety systems, particularly in adverse weather conditions like dense fog. It explores innovative solutions such as multi-spectral cameras, Lidar technology, physical fog sensors, accelerometers, and advanced network architectures. The discussion focuses on improving detection accuracy, range, and adaptability, ensuring vehicles remain secure even in challenging situations.

3.1 Challenges:

- **Limited Effectiveness in Extreme Fog:** The system's effectiveness diminishes significantly in dense fog, posing challenges to obstacle detection and reducing overall safety.
- **Dependency on Sensor Accuracy:** The system's reliability hinges on sensor accuracy, making it vulnerable to issues like dirt, damage, or calibration discrepancies, which can compromise functionality.
- **Range Limitations:** Limited sensor detection ranges pose challenges, especially in high-speed scenarios, where extended detection distances are vital for early warning.
- **Interference and False Positives:** External interference and false positives from various sources, including weather conditions and reflective surfaces, can lead to unnecessary alerts and interventions.
- **Maintenance Requirements:** Regular maintenance is crucial for optimal sensor performance; neglecting it can result in inaccuracies and decreased functionality over time.
- **Cost Constraints:** High-quality sensor technologies are costly, potentially discouraging budget-conscious consumers from adopting this advanced safety feature.

3.2 Future Improvements:

- **Multi-Spectral Cameras:** Integration of multi-spectral cameras enhances detection capabilities, providing a broader spectrum for accurate identification, especially in challenging visibility conditions.
- **Li-DAR Technology:** Incorporating Lidar technology extends the detection range and enhances object detection precision, making it invaluable for high-speed scenarios and open roads.
- **Physical Fog Sensors:** Utilizing low-cost proximity sensors specifically designed to detect fog presence enhances the system's ability to adapt to varying fog densities, ensuring consistent performance.
- **Accelerometers for Accident Detection:** Adding accelerometers enables the system to detect sudden deceleration, indicating potential accidents, and enhancing proactive safety measures.
- **Cellular Modules:** Integrating cellular modules and Single-Board Computers (SBCs) establishes a robust network. This network facilitates distress messaging, enabling instant communication with emergency services, authorities, and family members, enhancing overall safety.

Conclusion

The integration of sensor kits in vehicles marks a transformative leap in automotive safety, especially in foggy conditions. These systems, delivering real-time data and early warnings, serve as vigilant guardians, empowering drivers with vital information to navigate through challenging weather. Despite the significant advantages they offer, including heightened awareness and lowered collision risks, they are not without their challenges, such as issues related to precision, regular upkeep, and adaptability.

Amidst these challenges, ongoing research, continuous technological strides, and robust user education are pivotal. These endeavours pave the way for overcoming current limitations. With each refinement, these sensor kits edge closer to revolutionizing road safety, promising lives saved, accidents prevented, and overall driving experiences enhanced—especially in adverse weather. As these systems evolve and become more accessible, they stand poised to not only transform driving in fog but to fundamentally redefine the future of road safety.

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