

Editor's Choice



A protester participates in a rally against Japan's imperial system, in Tokyo, Japan May 1, 2019. REUTERS/Kim Kyung-Hoon



A protestor holds a sign with the face of Japan's new Emperor Naruhito during a rally against Japan's imperial system, in Tokyo, Japan May 1, 2019. The sign reads "End". REUTERS/Kim Kyung-Hoon



REFILE - CORRECTING ACTION People take pictures as the Japanese royal family arrives at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo, Japan May 1, 2019. REUTERS/Kim Kyung-Hoon



Japan's Princess Aiko arrives at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo



Kenya Fujisaki and his wife Saya pose for a photograph in front of a panel set up for a commemorative photos, after registering marriage in Tokyo



Japan's Emperor Naruhito attends a ritual called Kenji-to-Shokei-no-gi, a ceremony for inheriting the imperial regalia and seals, at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo

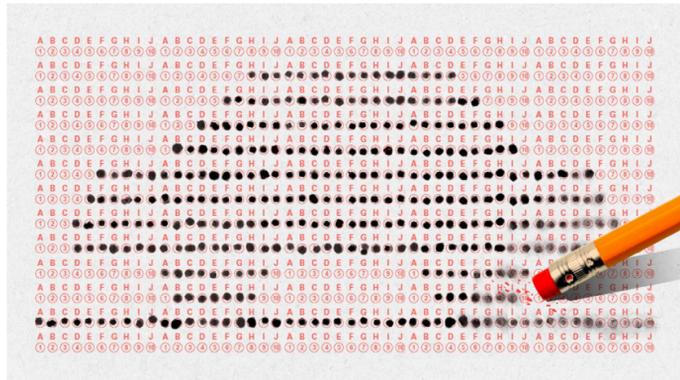


People wave Japanese flags as they wait for Emperor Naruhito outside the Imperial Palace in Tokyo, Japan



A man carries a flag which bears the new imperial era name "Reiwa" outside the Imperial Palace in Tokyo, Japan

How To Train Your Self-Driving Car



Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

Training a new driver is straightforward — make them practice until they can master basic skills well enough to pass a driver’s license exam. But there are no such tests for automated vehicles, leaving it up to AV developers to decide when their technology is safe enough to deploy.

Why it matters: AVs could reduce the number of traffic deaths and increase mobility for those who can’t drive, but only if the public trusts them. With no prescribed validation methods — and regulators largely on the sidelines as the technologies are advancing — it’s difficult to know how safe is safe enough.

The big picture: “It’s kind of the wild, wild west out there,” says Consumer Reports’ David Friedman, a former acting administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

•Even in California, which is a leader in AV policy, manufacturers merely need to certify that they have conducted their own validation tests and are satisfied their vehicles are safe for deployment on public roads.

What’s happening: There are basically 3 ways to test automated vehicle technology...

- 1.Run computer simulations of every possible scenario.
- 2.Perform tests on closed-course loops.
- 3.Drive around endlessly on pre-mapped routes.



Most developers use a combination of all three, but their approaches can vary. Some recent examples are...

•**Aurora Technologies** leans heavily on simulation rather than trying to rack up millions of real-world miles in a large test fleet, per a voluntary safety report filed with NHTSA on April 29.

•**Argo AI**, owned by Ford, uses a “continuous testing” process including how it trains its AV safety drivers, according to posted details of its testing process on its website.

Tesla is the outlier — its testing process is heavily dependent on cars already on the road, which the company sees as a huge competitive advantage.

•The company pulled back the curtain on its powerful new computer chip at an investor event on April 22, explaining how it collects data from 425,000 customer-owned vehicles to help train its algorithms.

•The system learns every time a Tesla driver intervenes with the car’s Autopilot system.

•Even when Autopilot isn’t engaged, the system keeps learning through what Tesla describes as “shadow mode” — com-

puting what the car would have done if Autopilot had been active, and comparing it to what the driver actually did.

•Tesla says it can shadow test many millions of miles every day, compared to the much slower rate of companies using safety drivers.

Yes, but: It’s not clear if the data captured from Tesla’s consumer fleet is better at training its AV system than data collected through more deliberative testing processes by other companies.

What’s needed: Several experts tell me there should be an independent, third-party assessment of each company’s safety claims.



“Self-driving cars are anything but proven. All we’re asking is to get us the data to prove these things deliver real safety benefits before we start using people as human guinea pigs.”

— David Friedman

What to watch: A new consortium is working to define safety testing practices to lay the groundwork for formal industry standards. Its first recommendations are expected this summer. (Courtesy axios.com)

Related

Regulating the humans behind the wheels of autonomous vehicles

The job of autonomous vehicle safety driver seems pretty easy: Get paid for sitting there while the car does all the work. But it’s a challenging assignment and self-regulated by the companies testing AVs, so the rules are only beginning to emerge.

The big picture: Safety drivers are re-

searchers’ eyes and ears, chronicling every roadway encounter to make the technology better. But requiring drivers — even specially trained ones — to pay attention without actually driving is difficult, which is why many companies argue that full autonomy is the safest way to go.



(Photo/Picture Alliance via Getty Images)

Background: Last March, a pedestrian was struck and killed by an Uber-operated self-driving car in Tempe, Arizona. The human monitoring the vehicle was believed to be watching a television show on her phone.

•The accident prompted a review of procedures and expectations for human safety drivers.

•Without federal regulations for AVs — just general guidance — the U.S. Department of Transportation suggests states should be the ones to regulate safety drivers.

•For now, best practices are emerging from a handful of voluntary safety self-assessments submitted by companies to the DOT.

How it works: Safety drivers typically work in pairs, one in the driver’s seat monitoring the environment and the other riding shotgun with a laptop, monitoring the car’s computing system and annotating the drive.

•The driver needs to be capable of taking over immediate manual control in the event of a failure or emergency.

•Typically, though, human interventions are triggered by a situation that the trained safety driver deems tricky.

•Argo AI, which is developing self-driving technology for Ford, adopts a “no heroes” policy when it comes to drivers retaking control, says president Peter

Rander.

“They need to learn that while we want the car to experience life, it has to do it responsibly. If they’re giving it too much margin and allowing it to get too close, bad things will happen.”

— Peter Rander, Argo AI



The work can be physically and mentally demanding. The pilot has to be alert, with their fingers lightly cupped around the steering wheel and their foot hovering over the pedals.

•AV companies usually limit time in the driver’s seat to about 2 hours, and the pilot and co-pilot swap jobs frequently.

AV safety drivers don’t need a special permit, but states like California require that they have a valid driver’s license and undergo AV training.

•The training typically lasts at least a month and involves both classroom instruction and driving on a test track.

•It includes software and hardware training, including how to turn the self-driving system on and off.

•On the track, instructors deliberately inject faults into the system to train drivers how to react properly.

“Someone with a computer in the car can cause the steering wheel to make a hard left and that’s when the craziness happens.”

— Peter Rander

What’s next: California and Arizona have already given Waymo permission to test vehicles in their states without a safety driver, and the Google self-driving car unit plans to launch its fully driverless service in Phoenix next month. (Courtesy axios.com)

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Julian Assange's Ecuadorian refuge has ended after more than six years, with the WikiLeaks chief facing American extradition for conspiracy to commit computer intrusion.

The big picture: Few figures have been so influential in our past decade — think Hillary Clinton's emails, Iraq War footage that created a political firestorm in President Obama's first term, and his offers to assist Edward Snowden. Follow the 9 year timeline of Assange's legal entanglements — which today entered a new phase, as he prepares to fight an extradition request to the U.S.

Timeline

Timeline: Julian Assange's 9-year legal limbo reaches its climax

2006: Assange establishes WikiLeaks and begins publishing classified information and news leaks from anonymous sources.

August 2010: A Swedish prosecutor issues an arrest warrant after 2 Swedish woman accused Assange of rape and molestation in separate allegations.

November 2010: WikiLeaks begins to release what it says are 251,287 diplomatic cables acquired from an anonymous source, prompting the U.S. Department of Justice to open an investigation. The source is later discovered to be army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning, who is later convicted and sentenced under the Espionage Act. Sweden also issues an international arrest warrant for Assange.

December 2010: Assange surrenders to British police. The courts find he should be granted bail.

May 2012: Britain's Supreme Court rules in favor of returning Assange to Sweden, but his attorneys request a delay.



Julian Assange arrives at Westminster Magistrates court on April 11, 2019 in London. (Photo/Getty Images)

WikiLeaks' Assange Gets 50 Weeks In UK Prison For Jumping Bail



Julian Assange in route to the Westminster Magistrates Court on April 11, 2019. (Photo/Getty Images)

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

WikiLeaks' Julian Assange was sentenced to 50 weeks in jail by a U.K. court on Wednesday for skipping bail by seeking asylum in London's Ecuadorian Embassy in 2012, the BBC reports.

What's next: Assange will begin extradition hearings tomorrow, as U.K. authorities must decide whether to send him to the U.S. to face hacking charges that carry a maximum of five years in prison.

August 2012: Assange is granted asylum at London's Ecuadorian Embassy, which cites concern over human rights abuses if he is extradited to Sweden. He first entered the embassy in June 2012.

August 2015: Swedish prosecutors drop molestation charges against Assange after they ran out of time to question him, but he still faces a rape accusation.

February 2016: The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention

finds that Assange has been "arbitrarily detained" by Sweden and the United Kingdom since December 2010, and calls for both governments to end his "deprivation of liberty."



In this file photo dated Friday May 19, 2017, watched by the media WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange looks out from the balcony of the Ecuadorian embassy. October 2016: The government of Ecua-

dor says it has severed Assange's internet due to WikiLeaks' release of hacked emails during the 2016 election — later revealed to be part of the Russian government's interference on behalf of then-candidate Donald Trump. Assange announces in December that his internet connection is reinstated.

April 2017: Former CIA Director Mike Pompeo describes WikiLeaks as a "nonstate hostile intelligence service" that constitutes a threat to U.S. national security.

May 2017: Swedish prosecutors drop their 7-year investigation of the rape allegation against Assange. November 2017: An errant line in a legal filing reveals that the Eastern District of Virginia has filed sealed charges against Assange.

December 2017: Ecuador grants Assange citizenship in a failed effort to give him diplomatic immunity.

February 2018: British Judge Emma Arbuthnot says the country will not drop charges against Assange after he skipping bail in 2012 by seeking asylum the Ecuadorian Embassy.

April 2019: One week before Assange is arrested, the Ecuadorian president says that Assange "has violated the agreement we reached with him and his legal counsel too many times," per the Washington Post.



April 11, 2019: Assange is arrested under a U.S. extradition warrant after Ecuador withdraws its offer of asylum. He is found guilty of skipping bail by a British judge, who calls him a "narcissist who cannot get beyond his own selfish interest."

What's next: Assange is due back in British court in May. In the meantime, he plans to fight a U.S. extradition request.

Assange's lawyer Mark Summers told a courtroom packed with journalists and WikiLeaks supporters that his client sought refuge in the Ecuadorian Embassy because "he was living with overwhelming fear of being rendered to the U.S." over his WikiLeaks activities.

He said Assange had a "well-founded" fear that he would be mistreated and possibly sent to the U.S. detention camp for terrorism suspects at Guantanamo Bay.

WikiLeaks editor-in-chief Kristinn Hrafnsson said after the sentencing that the extradition battle with the U.S. is now the "big fight" facing Assange.

"It will be a question of life and death for Mr. Assange," he said.

There was a small gathering of vocal Assange supporters outside the courthouse demanding he be freed. (Courtesy axios.com and apnews.com)



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