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MONSTERVISION FOR MINE SAFETY

Accidents involving huge mining vehicles can be prevented by using video and radar to warn drivers and pedestrians.

"Some of these mining vehicles are three storeys high and are like driving a small football field on wheels," says CSIRO researcher Patrick Glynn.

Two fatalities have occurred in open-cut mines over the past 10 years, as well as numerous incidents where people and small vehicles have been run over.

"Eliminating the blind spot on these huge mining vehicles is essential," says Mr Glynn.

As well as making mine sites a much safer place to move around in, collision-avoidance technology has the potential to save mining companies millions of dollars a year.

CSIRO developed a system which uses a high definition video camera mounted on the blind side of the vehicle, and a video monitor in the cab.

Radio frequency tagging identifies each person and vehicle on the mining site, and alerts the driver to their location within a 30-metre area of the vehicle.

"The system lets the driver know how many people or vehicles are behind. It also has potential applications outside of open-cut mining, such as on public buses," says Mr Glynn.

The system does not only alert the driver.

A device mounted under hard-hat visors flashes to warn wearers that they are in the pathway of a reversing vehicle.

The system also eliminates the necessity of audible reversing alarms.

These alarms have come under review following complaints from Hunter Valley residents who live near a large open cut mine.

As well, according to Mr Glynn, there are often accidents in queues of trucks waiting to receive loads.

"The long wait can cause driver inattention which, in addition to a lack of visibility, can result in collisions."

CSIRO is further developing the system to incorporate a radar device to warn drivers of rear-truck presence and 'truck creep'.

This will allow a series of antennae to be mounted around the vehicle, forming a virtual 'web' which will allow the detection of foreground to background movement. The system will be capable of identifying the speed of both vehicles and able to calculate the rate of closing.

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