Prevent accidents by making your backseat disappear

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Crunch.

That’s the last sound you want to hear when you’re backing up your car.

It is scary. It is alarming. It is NOT a good sound.

It’s the reason dashboard cams were invented. Unfortunately, the embedded cameras only show a small portion of what’s behind the car, and accidents still happen.

But what if you could make your backseat disappear, allowing you to see everything going on behind you from people to poles to other cars?

Ask and you shall receive.

Researchers from Keio University of Japan [1] are using retroreflective materials to create an invisibility cloak for your car.

A few years ago, the team found if they embedded thousands of highly reflective beads at specific angles, the beads would reflect light with only a small amount of the light going back in the original direction. The scattered light produces the illusion of invisibility.

The cloak never really took off, but the team decided the technology could be better used in a car-safety capacity. By placing the fabric on the backseat of the car, from the driver’s side of the vehicle, the backseat reflects the scenery from behind the car, making the backseat “disappear” so the driver is able to see *everything* behind him. The images are projected onto the fabric via a camera. They used the fabric in the backseat of a Prius that debuted in October at the 2012 Digital Content Expo.

No word yet on what happens if there is someone sitting in the backseat—I assume it just reflects onto their skin—or what happens when the technology becomes a bigger distraction than a helpful tool.

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