When Autonomous Cars Kill Somebody

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As drones, bipedal robots, and algorithm technologies continue to improve, the world of autonomous everything is looming. Perhaps looming isn't the right word, but I feel compelled to set an ominous tone in order to provide an interesting conclusion. Beyond the iPad, synchronized quad-copters, and even 3D printers, one of the world's most powerful forms of emerging technology is the ability to make more machines and devices autonomous.

New technology, more often than not, is met with some trepidation; regardless of its usefulness or its ability to disrupt current methods (this is painting with a somewhat broad brush stroke, but if we go to the root of most new tech, it is accurate). See my article about an emerging wind turbine technology. [1] Making machines autonomous has been a gradual process, but each new plateau seems to run into scrutiny (sometimes unwarranted).

For instance, when automated manufacturing assembly lines first emerged as a viable replacement of some low-skill manual labor, there was backlash. Understandably so, machines were threatening to take jobs and many didn't trust their soul-less replacements to do qualified work. That has changed to some extent, as automation has taken over a lot of assembly work. Jobs that pay $20 an hour to put a blue bolt in the blue hole have vanished.

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