

US to probe fatal Indiana crash involving Tesla Model 3

January 9 2020, by Tom Krisher

The U.S. government's road safety agency is sending a special team to Indiana to investigate a fatal crash involving a Tesla electric vehicle.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration said Wednesday that its team will check the [crash scene](#) and inspect the Model 3 vehicle involved in the Dec. 29 crash with a parked firetruck on Interstate 70 near Terre Haute.

The crash, which killed the driver's wife who was a passenger in the Tesla, is the second one to be investigated in the past two weeks by NHTSA. Also on Dec. 29, a Tesla Model S sedan left a freeway in Gardena, California, at a high speed, ran a red light and struck a Honda Civic, killing two people inside, police said. The agency dispatched its special crash investigation unit to the site on New Year's Eve.

Authorities have yet to determine in either case whether the Teslas were operating on Autopilot, a system designed to keep a car in its lane and a safe distance from other vehicles. Autopilot also can change lanes on its own.

Tesla has said repeatedly that its Autopilot system is designed only to assist drivers, who must still pay attention and be ready to intervene at all times. The company contends that Teslas with Autopilot are safer than vehicles without it, but cautions that the system does not prevent all crashes.

NHTSA's crash program has inspected 23 crashes involving vehicles that the agency believed were operating on some form of partially automated advanced driver assist system. Fourteen of these cases involved Tesla models. The team investigates more than 100 crashes per year.

The firetruck in the Indiana crash was in the freeway travel lanes with its lights flashing as crews handled a different problem.

Also, on Dec. 7, yet another Model 3 struck a police cruiser on a Connecticut highway, though no one was hurt. NHTSA also is investigating that crash.

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