

# Lizards, snakes block construction on Tesla's Berlin plant

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Tesla CEO Elon Musk visited the factory site outside Berlin in September

US automaker Tesla was forced to suspend forest clearing for a new German plant Tuesday after environmentalists won an injunction over

threats to the habitats of resident lizards and snakes.

The electric vehicle giant ran into opposition from two nature conservation groups which launched urgent court action against the felling of 83 hectares (205 acres) of pine trees for its huge "gigafactory" plant at Gruenheide, south of Berlin.

The news risks delaying the company's hopes to roll its first electric cars off the [assembly line](#) at the site in July 2021.

The administrative court in Frankfurt an der Oder told AFP it issued an interim injunction Monday "imposing a temporary halt to clearing" to allow for an examination of the case "in view of the rapid progress of the clearing work".

A final decision on the complaint filed by the Brandenburg state chapter of the Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union (NABU) and Green League is still pending.

Among the concerns was the destruction of habitats of protected species of sand lizards and smooth snakes in the area, or disturbing them during their winter hibernation.

"Tesla cannot and must not place itself above the law," said Heinz Herwig Mascher, chairman of the Green League in Brandenburg, in a statement.

Despite the energy-saving image of Tesla, run by eccentric billionaire Elon Musk, the plant has long been in environmentalists' crosshairs.

In February, a court temporarily halted deforestation work over the alleged impact on wildlife and concerns it might harm the drinking water supply.

Work was also stopped earlier this year as authorities defused seven World War II bombs discovered at the site.

Tesla's first site in Europe still only has provisional construction permits, and has been authorised by local officials to begin work at its own risk, pending final authorisation.

Tesla said the land covered under the latest injunction must be cleared to allow for pipelines and storage, according to the Tagesspiegel newspaper.

Last week, Tesla was allowed to start installing machines in the gigafactory's paintshop, with the vast factory planned to churn out 500,000 Model 3 sedans and Model Y SUVs per year.

Musk recently announced the company was looking to build the world's largest battery factory at Gruenheide alongside the car plant.

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