

California places Tesla's 'Full Self-Driving' under review

May 18 2021, by Tom Krisher and Stefanie Dazio



In this April 2, 2021 file photo two women in an electric car drive into a Tesla delivery location and service center in Corte Madera, Calif. California's Department of Motor Vehicles is reviewing whether Tesla is violating a state regulation by advertising its vehicles as being fully autonomous without meeting the legal definition of self-driving. The department says Monday, May 17, 2021 that the regulation prohibits advertising vehicles for sale or lease as autonomous if the regulation isn't met. (AP Photo/Eric Risberg, File)

California's Department of Motor Vehicles is reviewing whether Tesla is violating a state regulation by advertising its vehicles as being fully autonomous without meeting the legal definition of self-driving.

The department confirmed the review Monday in an email to The Associated Press. State regulation prohibits advertising vehicles for sale or lease as autonomous if they can't comply with the regulatory definition, it said.

Tesla advertises a \$10,000 "Full Self-Driving" option on the website for its [electric vehicles](#), but the same website says the vehicles cannot drive themselves. CEO Elon Musk has said he expects Tesla's vehicles will be able to drive themselves more safely than humans sometime this year.

"The current enabled features require active driver supervision and do not make the [vehicle](#) autonomous," the website says.

Tesla is testing its "Full Self-Driving" software in the U.S. in cars driven by selected owners.

The company based in Palo Alto, California, also calls its partially automated driver-assist system "Autopilot."

Tesla, which has disbanded its public relations department, did not respond Monday to a request for comment. [The Los Angeles Times](#) first reported the DMV's review.

The DMV, which regulates testing of self-driving vehicles on California roads, said violating the regulation can bring a suspension of autonomous vehicle permits and revocation of a manufacturer's license. It would not comment further on the review, including when it began.

Tesla has a DMV permit to test autonomous vehicles with human backup

drivers. But it is not among the companies permitted to test without human drivers.



In this April 2, 2021 file photo new electric cars are parked at a Tesla delivery location and service center in Corte Madera, Calif. California's Department of Motor Vehicles is reviewing whether Tesla is violating a state regulation by advertising its vehicles as being fully autonomous without meeting the legal definition of self-driving. The department says Monday, May 17, 2021 that the regulation prohibits advertising vehicles for sale or lease as autonomous if the regulation isn't met. (AP Photo/Eric Risberg, file)

The company says its "Full Self-Driving" software can navigate, automatically change lanes and follow traffic lights and stop signs.

"Autopilot" can keep a car centered in its lane and a safe distance from vehicles in front of it.

The probe comes amid several high-profile crashes nationwide—including a fatal wreck in California—involving Autopilot in recent weeks.

On Saturday, a Tesla in [autopilot](#) mode plowed into a Snohomish County deputy's patrol car north of Seattle, causing significant damage but no injuries.

A 35-year-old man was killed on May 5 in [Fontana, California](#), when his Tesla Model 3 struck an overturned semi on a freeway east of Los Angeles about 2:30 a.m.

The California Highway Patrol initially said its preliminary investigation had found that Autopilot "was engaged" prior to the [crash](#), but walked back its statement a day later. Investigators have not made "a final determination made as to what driving mode the Tesla was in or if it was a contributing factor to the crash," it said.

The victim, Steven Michael Hendrickson, had previously posted social media videos of himself riding in the vehicle without his hands on the wheel or foot on the pedal.

The DMV joins the U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration in investigating Tesla's automated systems. In the past, NHTSA, has taken a hands-off approach to regulating partial and fully automated systems for fear of hindering development of promising new features.

But since March, the agency has stepped up inquiries into Teslas, dispatching teams to three crashes. It has investigated 28 Tesla crashes in

the past few years, but thus far has relied on voluntary safety compliance from auto and tech companies. At least three people have been killed in U.S. crashes in which Autopilot was operating but neither the system nor the driver took action to avoid obstacles.

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