

AUTOMOTIVE

## Tesla faces federal investigation over autopilot system

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*U.S. government agencies are questioning the safety of Tesla's autopilot feature. Image credit: Tesla*

By LUXURY DAILY NEWS SERVICE

The U.S. government has opened an investigation against American automaker Tesla citing safety concerns over its autopilot system.

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Since 2018, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has identified 11 crashes in which Teslas on autopilot or traffic aware cruise control have hit vehicles where emergency vehicle flashing lights, flares and hazard warnings have been present. From these motor accidents, 17 people were injured and one was killed, according to the agency.

"Today's action by NHTSA is a positive step forward for safety," said Jennifer L. Homendy, chair of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), in a statement on Aug. 16. "As we navigate the emerging world of advanced driving assistance systems, it is important that NHTSA has insight into what these vehicles can, and cannot, do."

### Tightening safety regulations

The NTSB recommended last year that NHTSA evaluate Tesla Autopilot-equipped vehicles to determine if the system's operating limitations, the foreseeability of driver misuse and the ability to operate the vehicles outside the intended operational design domain pose an unreasonable risk to safety.

If safety defects are identified, NTSB recommended using applicable enforcement authority to ensure that Tesla takes corrective action.

The NTSB has also called on NHTSA to develop a method to verify that manufacturers of vehicles equipped with Level 2 vehicle automation incorporate system safeguards that limit the use of automated vehicle control systems to those conditions for which they were designed and for NHTSA to develop standards for driver monitoring systems.



*Tesla introduced autopilot in 2014, and began implementing the system into its vehicles in 2016. Image credit: Tesla*

This is certainly not the first incident of criticism toward the brand's autopilot system.

In 2017, a year after Tesla implemented autonomous features in its vehicles, the automaker was hit with a class action lawsuit claiming its enhanced autopilot software is nonfunctional and dangerous ([see story](#)).

In 2018, the Center for Auto Safety and Consumer Watchdog claimed advertisements for Tesla's autopilot system were deceptive.

The groups called on the Federal Trade Commission to investigate Tesla's marketing efforts, claiming the automaker misrepresented its autopilot feature causing consumers to believe its cars are self-driving ([see story](#)).

The new investigation covers Tesla's current product line, including the Models Y, X, S and 3, from 2014 through 2021.

While the investigation has only just begun, Tesla investors should consider how potential regulations from NHTSA will affect the automaker's shares, which fell 4.3 percent on Monday following the announcement.

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