

# Tesla may have been on Autopilot in California crash which killed two

Authorities assign investigation team that specializes in Autopilot system incidents to inspect Tesla Model S that hit Honda Civic

The US National Highway Traffic Safety Administration is investigating a crash involving a speeding Tesla that killed two people in a Los Angeles suburb, the agency said on Tuesday.

Spokesman Sean Rushton would not say whether the Tesla Model S was on Autopilot when it crashed on 29 December in Gardena. That system is designed to automatically change lanes and keep a safe distance from other vehicles.



The black Tesla had left a freeway and was moving at a high rate of speed when it ran a red light and slammed into a Honda Civic at an intersection, police said. A man and woman in the Civic died at the scene. A man and woman in the Tesla were hospitalized with non-life threatening injuries. No arrests were immediately made.

An NHTSA statement said the agency has assigned its special crash investigation team to inspect the car and the crash scene. That team has inspected 13 crashes involving Tesla vehicles the agency believed were operating on the Autopilot system.

Results were published in two of those cases, one of which involved Autopilot. Results are pending in the other 10 cases, the agency said in a statement.

Both Tesla and the NHTSA have advised that advanced driver assist systems such as Autopilot are not entirely autonomous but require human drivers to pay attention at all times. But several crashes - some fatal - have been blamed on driver inattention linked to overconfidence in such systems.

In one crash report, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) referred to it as "automation complacency".

The NTSB has criticized Tesla's Autopilot. In September, the agency said that in a 2018 crash in Culver City where a Tesla hit a fire truck, the design of the Autopilot system "permitted the driver to disengage from the driving task". Nobody was hurt in that accident.

The NTSB determined in September 2017 that design limitations of the Tesla Model S Autopilot played a major role in a May 2016 fatal crash in Florida involving a vehicle operating under Autopilot. But it blamed the crash on an inattentive Tesla driver's over reliance on technology and a truck driver who made a left turn in front of the car.