

Another One Of The Vast Tesla Safety Defects: Steering Wheels Fall Off

Wed, 08 Mar 2023 08:42:36, swmof88, [post_tag: another-one-of-the-vast-tesla-safety-defects-steering-wheels-fall-off, category: news, post_tag: u-s-probing-tesla-over-steering-wheels-that-might-fall-off]

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U.S. probing Tesla over steering wheels that might fall off



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A Tesla Model Y Long Range is displayed in February 2021 at the Tesla Gallery in Troy, Mich. CARLOS OSORIO / AP

U.S. auto safety regulators have opened an investigation into Tesla's Model Y SUV after getting two complaints that the steering wheels can come off while it's being driven.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration says the probe covers an estimated 120,000 vehicles from the 2023 model year.

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The agency says in both cases the Model Ys were delivered to customers with a missing bolt that holds the wheel to the steering column. A friction fit held the steering wheels on, but they separated when force was exerted while the SUVs were being driven.

The agency says in documents posted on its website Wednesday that both incidents happened while the SUVs had low mileage on them.

Investigators are looking at how often the problem happens, how many vehicles were affected and at Tesla's manufacturing process.

The Model Y is Tesla's top-selling vehicle.

The Associated Press left messages seeking comment from Tesla, which has disbanded its media relations department.

In one complaint filed with NHTSA, an owner said he was driving with his family on Route 1 in Woodbridge, New Jersey, when the steering wheel suddenly came off on Jan. 29. The owner wrote that there were no cars behind him and he was able to pull toward the road divider. There were no injuries in the Tesla, which was purchased on Jan. 24.

"The lead investigator provided assurance and indicated this is a serious matter and they have already contacted Tesla for further investigation," the owner said.

The complaint has a link to a Twitter post from the owner that included a video of the detached steering wheel and pictures of the white Tesla being towed.

CBS News exchanged messages with Perak and Neha Patel, who owned the Tesla in question, and they shared photos of the car and its detached steering wheel.



Prerak and Neha Patel shared this photo of the steering wheel that detached on their Tesla Model Y. PRERAK & NEHA PATEL/TWITTER

At first a Tesla service center gave them a cost estimate of \$103.96 to repair the problem. The service center apologized in what appear to be text messages posted on Twitter.

When the owner wrote that he had lost faith in Tesla and asked for a refund, the service center removed the charge and wrote that Tesla doesn't have a return policy, but he could reach out to the sales and delivery team.

He was later given the option of keeping the car or getting it replaced with a new one, according to his post on Twitter. The family received a new Tesla in late February.

"This time they make sure nothing is wrong in it," he said.

While the family was excited about the Tesla when it was first delivered, the children were wary of the replacement after the steering wheel incident, the Patels said. The parents said they reassured their kids and helped restore their confidence in the new car. The family hopes Tesla investigates "so no other family experience what we experienced."



Prerak and Neha Patel pose with their new Tesla. They received it after the steering wheel came off of their previous Tesla. PRERAK & NEHA PATEL/TWITTER

—Aliza Chasan contributed reporting.

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Elon Musk makes groveling apology to Twitter worker with muscular dystrophy who he fired and publicly shamed for 'doing no work'



Elon Musk (inset) publicly apologized to Halli Thorleifsson, who suffers from muscular dystrophy, after he accused him using his disability as an 'excuse' to do 'no actual work'. Thorleifsson, 45, (left) had sent a direct tweet to the billionaire to ask whether he was still employed at Twitter after he was locked out of his work's computer system, telling Musk that the HR department had not responded to him for nine days. Eventually, Thorleifsson, who uses a wheelchair, got his answer after a surreal Twitter exchange with Musk, who proceeded to quiz him about his work, question his disability and need for accommodations. Musk tweeted: 'The reality is that this guy (who is independently wealthy) did no actual work, claimed as his excuse that he had a disability that prevented him from typing, yet was simultaneously tweeting up a storm. Can't say I have a lot of respect for that.' While the exchange was going on, Thorleifsson said he received an email that he was no longer employed. After the conversation went viral on the platform, with Musk's conduct receiving widespread condemnation, the Twitter CEO was forced to apologize to the Iclander.