

The existing “Automated Driving” Functions Are Not Fully Automated!

Existing “Automated driving” functions, including the “Autopilot” features of Tesla’s vehicle that was involved in an accident in the United States in May, are “driving assistance technologies” developed on the assumption that the driver is responsible for driving the vehicle safely; these functions are not fully automated and are not responsible for operating the vehicle safely for the driver.

In May this year, the driver of a vehicle made by Tesla Motors (“Tesla”) was killed in an accident in the United States. The vehicle, which was being driven in so called “Autopilot” mode, crashed with a trailer coming from the side. The U.S. authority is now investigating the details of the accident.

Existing “Automated driving” functions, including Tesla’s “Autopilot” features, are “driving assistance technologies”. The driver is responsible for driving the vehicle safely; these functions are not fully automated and are not responsible for operating the vehicle safely when using the functions.

Therefore, the driver has to take responsibility for driving safely with a correct understanding of the limitations and cautions for such functions and without excessively relying on the functions.

In view of this recent accident, the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT) and the National Police Agency have decided to thoroughly alert users of vehicles with existing “automated driving” functions, provided by all manufactures. Today, the MLIT requested the Japan Automobile Manufacturers Association and Japan Automobile Importers Association to explain such matters thoroughly to vehicle users when selling vehicles, etc.

If you have any questions about your vehicle or when purchasing a new vehicle with “Automated driving” functions, please ask your dealer, etc. about the functions of the driving assistance technologies used in the vehicle as well as the relevant cautions.

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Reference 1: Tesla’s “Autopilot” feature
 The “Autopilot” feature of Tesla vehicles is merely a function for lane keeping assistance, lane change assistance, automatic braking, etc. when using the features, the driver has to drive the vehicle safely by monitoring the front and surroundings of the vehicle in the same way as driving a normal vehicle.*

* The feature corresponds to Level 2 of the automated driving levels defined in “Public-Private ITS Initiative/Roadmaps 2016” (The Strategic Headquarters for the Promotion of an Advanced Information and Telecommunications Network Society, May 20, 2016).

In addition, depending on the weather, traffic or other conditions, etc., these functions may not work properly or may suddenly stop operating.

For these reasons, it is possibly extremely dangerous if the driver fails to pay attention while using the “Autopilot” feature. Furthermore, if an accident should occur, in principle the driver will be held responsible.

Reference 2: Definition of safe driving assistance systems/automated driving systems (excerpt from “Public-Private ITS Initiative/Roadmaps 2016”)

System replacing the function of the driver in the vehicle

Classification		Description	Note (responsibility, etc.)	System that offers the function described at left	
Information-based ²		Alerting the driver, etc.	Driver’s responsibility	“Safe driving assistance system”	
Automatic control-based	Level 1: Single system	System performs acceleration, steering or braking.	Driver’s responsibility		
	Level 2: Combined system	System performs simultaneously more than one operation of acceleration, steering and braking.	Driver’s responsibility * Driver is required to monitor the system and be ready to operate the vehicle safely at any time.	“Semi-automated driving system”	“Automated driving system”
	Level 3: Advanced system	System performs all of acceleration, steering and braking, and the driver takes over only when requested by the system.	System’s responsibility (when in automated driving mode) ³ * Automated driving in specific traffic environment (automated driving mode) * Driver is not required to monitor the system (in automated driving mode; prior to the system’s request)		
	Level 4: Fully automated driving	System performs all of acceleration, steering and braking, with no involvement of the driver.	System’s responsibility * Automated driving for the entire travel	“Fully automated driving system”	

(Note 1) At any level, the driver in the vehicle can intervene in the system’s control at any time.