

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**December 16, 2025**

## **DMV Finds Tesla Violated California State Law**

**What you need to know:** The California DMV finds Tesla Motors in violation of state law for misleadingly using the terms “autopilot” and “Full Self-Driving Capability” in the marketing of their electric vehicles and provides an opportunity for Tesla to address issues prior to an imposition of a penalty.

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**Sacramento** — The California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) today issued its decision in the Tesla administrative case (Case Nos. 21-02188 and 21-02189), adopting the administrative law judge’s (ALJ) proposed decision, which concludes that Tesla’s use of the terms “autopilot” and “Full Self-Driving Capability” to describe its vehicles’ Advanced Driving Assistance Features (ADAS) is misleading and violates state law.

“The DMV is committed to safety on California’s roadways,” said DMV Director Steve Gordon. “The DMV’s decision today confirms that the department will hold every vehicle manufacturer to the highest safety standards to keep California’s drivers, passengers and pedestrians protected. Tesla can take simple steps to pause this decision and permanently resolve this issue — steps autonomous vehicle companies and other automakers have been able to achieve in California’s nation-leading and supportive innovation marketplace.”

The administrative law judge’s proposed decision ordered suspensions of Tesla’s manufacturing license and its dealer license for 30 days. Upon review, the DMV’s decision adopts the ALJ’s findings regarding violations, but reduces the penalties, immediately imposing a permanent stay of the suspension of Tesla’s manufacturer’s license and giving Tesla 60 days to take action regarding its use of the term “autopilot.” If Tesla fails to address the issue, after 60 days it will be subject to the 30-day suspension of its dealer license.

### **Background**

DMV alleged that Tesla made and disseminated statements that were misleading in advertising their vehicles as equipped, or potentially equipped, with features tantamount to autonomous driving capability.

Beginning in May 2021, Tesla advertised advanced driver assistance system (ADAS) features in written marketing materials primarily on Tesla’s website using the product label and descriptions “Autopilot” and “Full Self-Driving Capability,” and the phrase “The system is designed to be able to conduct short and long-distance trips with no action required by the person in the driver’s seat.” However, vehicles equipped with those ADAS features could not at the time of those advertisements, and cannot now, operate as autonomous vehicles. Based on these false advertisements, DMV filed accusations against Tesla’s manufacturer and dealer licenses in November 2023. Tesla subsequently discontinued use of the term “Full Self-Driving Capability,” instead specifying that the system requires driver supervision by using the term “Full Self-Driving (Supervised).”

The California Office of Administrative Hearings held a hearing before an ALJ in this case on July 21–25, 2025, and the ALJ issued a proposed decision on November 20, 2025. By statute, that proposed decision is

subject to review by DMV and today's decision adopts the ALJ's decision, with the modified penalty described above.

### **Before Going to a DMV Office — Try Online First**

Most DMV tasks do not require an office visit. The DMV encourages customers to use its [online services](#) and other service channels for tasks such as eligible driver's license and vehicle registration renewals. Customers can also use the [Service Advisor](#) on the DMV website to learn about options to complete DMV tasks.

Go Paperless — Customers must create a MyDMV account at [dmv.ca.gov/mydmv](https://dmv.ca.gov/mydmv) and opt in to receive their paperless vehicle registration, driver's license and identification card renewal notices by email.

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