

# California cops say Tesla cars are the worst cars ever

By [Melissa Koenig](#)

**California** cops who have trialed Teslas ahead of the state's ban on gas and diesel vehicles have revealed they are 'nearly unusable' for police departments.

Gov. [Gavin Newsom](#) mandated in September 2020 that [all vehicles sold in California be zero emission by 2035](#).

Since then, a number of local municipalities have implemented their own goals to convert their fleet of gas-powered cars to electric vehicles.

But the police chiefs who have purchased Teslas say the design of the cars is detrimental to police operations.



Several California police departments purchased Teslas ahead of the ban on gas vehicles

TRENDING



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Among the California police departments that have tried using Teslas was the Ukiah Police Department, the largest municipal police force in Mendocino County.

There, Police Chief Cedrick Crook requested the City Council approve the purchase of two Tesla Model 3s, which is the company's sedan, on August 7, 2024.

That purchase totaled nearly \$150,000 between the cost of the cars and \$35,000 in modifications to make the Teslas patrol-ready, Crook [told the San Francisco Gate](#).

He said the vehicles needed the standard emergency lights, sirens, radio, antenna, push bar, partition and gun rack, but the Teslas also needed to be upgraded with ballistic panels to toughen it up for the streets.

The problem is that there is only one modification shop for Teslas in the state: Unplugged Performance in Hawthorne, which is about 500 miles south of Ukiah.

Store employees said it would take months to make all the modifications necessary to make the vehicles patrol-ready.

Adding to the issues with the cars, only two Tesla Supercharger stations have been installed in the city over the past two years. It remains unclear how officers would be [charging the electric vehicles](#), Crook said.

He noted that police are often required to transport suspects, witnesses or victims to trials or court dates, which could be far away, and if detectives were driving a Tesla, Crook said they would have to spend time at an unsecured public charging station while protecting the person.



© Staff photo from the city of Ukiah

Police Chief Cedrick Crook requested the City Council approve the purchase of two Tesla Model 3s, which is the company's sedan, on August 7, 2024

He went on to say that the back seats 'only have room for one prisoner', limiting an officer's ability to sequester suspects.

If the city had only a Tesla fleet, Crook said, incidents involving more than one suspect will require more cops to respond with more cars, putting a strain on the police department's resources.

Crook also noted that he had heard from other officers that they were not able to comfortably get into and out of the driver's seat with their duty belt on because of the car's sleek design.

Those belts could weigh up to 25 pounds and add bulk to an officer's torso, he explained.

And in firefights, Crook said, officers are taught to hide behind a car's engine block, but in Teslas, there are no engine blocks.

In the end, he said, he wound up only buying the Model 3s for administrative staff.

'I'm not ready to put an officer in a Tesla,' the police chief told the Gate.

Similarly, Menlo Park Police Department Chief David Norris ordered three Tesla Model Ys, which are slightly larger than the Model 3s, got them outfitted for patrol duties and conducted a study of the vehicle's performance as a patrol car.

**The study found** that Menlo Park cops 'appreciated the acceleration, steering and vehicle speed compared to the hybrids and remaining gasoline-only patrol vehicles.'

But, it said, 'the Tesla presented challenges due to the small interior space, "smart car" features and low vehicle profile limiting maneuverability (eg jumping curbs, off-road use).'

It also said that the partition separating the front and back seats reduced the available space up front - where the center console, light controls and communications tablet are housed.

As a result, officers in full uniform had limited room in the front seat, with some cops saying their duty belts and bulletproof vests would jut into the passenger seat 'making it nearly unusable.'





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Officers also reported 'autopilot interference,' which caused 'a delay when officers shift into drive' and triggered an automatic stop when cops tried to pull over on the side of the road, possibly because the car assumed it was veering off course.

Making matters worse, the lighting controls on Tesla's touch screen required an onerous multistep process to dim the lights at night, and the proximity locking, sleep mode and self-closing doors caused issues with cops being able to keep their patrol vehicles locked.

Norris ultimately concluded that the Tesla Ys, in their current design, do not appear to be 'patrol cars of the future,' though he noted he remained committed to Menlo Park's electric vehicle fleet goal.

One way to do that may be to use other electric vehicles, like the Ford F-150 Lightnings, which the Fort Bragg Police Department tried out.

Chief Neil Cervenka said he opted for those vehicles because the parts are readily available, as are mechanics who can maintain the vehicle.

He also said modifications for the F-150s to make them patrol-ready are less expensive because there are more vendors to choose from and more options.

'Tesla isn't the right answer in the law enforcement market currently for electric adoption,' he said, 'but there might be better options.'