

# Four people dead after another Tesla erupted into flames in France: Police probing blaze

By [Matt Drake](#)

Four people were killed in [France](#) after a [Tesla](#) electric car caught fire, as police now investigate the cause of the inferno.

The blaze occurred outside the city of Niort on Saturday at around 10.45pm local time (9.45pm BST), causing the deaths of the driver and three passengers who were employees at a restaurant in nearby Melle.

According to preliminary reports, the vehicle rammed into several road signs at high speed.

The passengers on board were already dead when rescuers arrived at the scene, police said.

But the cause of the fire remains unknown at the moment and an inquiry has been opened.



The blaze (pictured) occurred outside the city of Niort on Saturday at around 10.45pm local time



In December, Tesla recalled more than two million vehicles in the United States and Canada (stock photo)

A local judge said: 'An inquiry has been opened to determine the causes and circumstances of the deadly accident, a probe during which expertise on the vehicle will be requested.'

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Tesla, founded by the billionaire CEO Elon Musk, has frequently faced scrutiny over safety issues.

In April, the carmaker settled with the family of an engineer killed when a Tesla Model X crashed in Silicon Valley in 2018, a move that avoided a trial.

The driver was on a California highway using the Tesla autopilot feature when the car drove into a concrete median, according to the lawsuit.

In December, Tesla recalled more than two million vehicles in the United States and Canada because of risks associated with the autopilot software and a potentially 'increased risk of a collision', according to US national regulators.

Fires sparked from lithium-ion batteries found in popular items like e-bikes, e-scooters and electric vehicles are on the rise in the UK.

E-bike battery fires have risen by 70 per cent in 2023, with 270 lithium-powered machines burning in the last year.

Fire and rescue services responded to 48 per cent more blazes from all lithium-ion battery-powered devices last year than in 2022.

Only last Thursday, a car was destroyed by the blaze in the Leytonstone area of East London during the early hours of this morning.

From the video and images available of the incident, it appears that the vehicle in question was a Skoda EV.

The cause of the fire is still unknown to authorities.

A single fire engine is usually sent to car fires with petrol or diesel engines. But fire chiefs are now sending two units for electric vehicles or hybrids that have lithium-ion batteries.

Energy stored in the batteries is released as heat in a process known as 'thermal runaway', which is extremely difficult to extinguish and can produce 'rocket-like' flames.



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Pictured, the aftermath of the blaze in the Leytonstone area of East London last Thursday

They also belch out highly toxic fumes such as hydrogen cyanide and carbon monoxide, posing a secondary risk to those nearby.

Experts warn the 'dash for electrification' will put brigades under increasing pressure as crews will not be available to handle other incidents.

Fire services in Norfolk, Essex, Kent and London are among those that have introduced a two-unit policy for electric vehicle fires.

Normal car fires take between 220 and 400 gallons of water to extinguish. But up to 6,600 gallons is needed for electric vehicles. Precautions also have to be taken to limit the amount of contaminated water entering water courses.

Brigades are experimenting with different methods to put out blazes, including submerging cars in water, covering them with foam or covering them with a large fire-proof blanket but there is no consensus.

A research paper about risk management of lithium-ion batteries published by Birmingham University in 2021 stated: 'LIBs have penetrated everyday life faster than our understanding of the risks and challenges associated with them... robust educational and legal processes are needed to understand and manage the risks for first responders and the public at large.'