Tesla with 'no one' driving crashes, killing two passengers

A 2019 Tesla Model S vehicle that 'no one' appeared to be driving crashed late Saturday in Texas, US. The crash caused the vehicle to burst into flames and kill its two passengers, according to local media reports.

Photo by Carter Baran on Unsplash

The car reportedly hit a tree north of Houston after travelling at high speed and failing to navigate a turn. One victim was found in the front passenger seat and the other in the rear, according to Mark Herman, a Harris County Precinct 4 constable.

Herman said the position of the victims, statements and other physical evidence suggests that no one was driving the vehicle at the time of impact. He also mentioned that the crash is still under investigation.

The constable said his office is coordinating with federal authorities, without specifying which ones, and didn't know whether the autopilot feature was engaged.

It took more than 113,562 litres of water to extinguish the fire, which burned for four hours, he added.

Tesla didn't immediately respond to a request for comment Sunday. The company's shares fell as much as 2% in U.S. pre-market trading on Monday.

Federal officials have criticised Tesla for fire risks related to the battery packs in its cars and for not doing enough to keep drivers from using its driver-assist function inappropriately. In a hearing last year, the National Transportation Safety Board's chairman said that "it's time to stop enabling drivers in any partially automated vehicle to pretend that they have driverless cars."

Tesla's chief executive officer Elon Musk has defended the safety record of his company's vehicles. He shared a report on Twitter saying that a Tesla with autopilot engaged is now approaching a '10 times lower' chance of an accident than an average vehicle.

> " *Tesla with Autopilot engaged now approaching 10 times lower chance of accident than average vehicle*
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> *https://t.co/6IGy52wVhC— Elon Musk (@elonmusk) April 17, 2021* "