

# la owner empt opilot ense ing DUI p

g drunk is still  
, even with a driver-  
ance system active.

HAS THE HIGHEST  
ER, PER CAPITA, OF  
< DRIVERS WHO TURN  
> BE ASSHOLES!

**Y B. LEE -**

---

A San Francisco Tesla  
owner has learned  
the hard way that  
Tesla's Autopilot  
feature does not  
excuse getting  
behind the wheel  
while intoxicated. On

Saturday, January 13, police discovered a man in his Tesla vehicle on the San Francisco–Oakland Bay Bridge. The *San Francisco Chronicle* reports that "the man had apparently passed out in the stopped car while stuck in the flow of busy bridge traffic at 5:30pm, according to the California Highway Patrol."

When police woke the man up, he assured officers that everything was fine because the car was "on autopilot." No one was injured in the incident, and the California Highway Patrol made a snarky tweet about it:

 [View image on Twitter](#)

---

**CHP...**    
@CHPSanF

When u pass out behind the wheel on the Bay Bridge with more than 2x legal alcohol BAC limit and are found by a CHP Motor. Driver explained Tesla had been set on autopilot. He was arrested and charged with suspicion of DUI. Car towed (no it didn't drive itself to the tow yard).

10:23 AM - Jan 19,  
2018

 33  223  
 396

Needless to say, other Tesla owners—and people who own competing systems like **Cadillac's Super Cruise**—should not follow this guy's example. No cars on the market right now have fully driverless technology available. Autopilot, Supercruise, and other products are driver *assistance* products—they're designed to operate with an attentive human driver as a backup. Driving drunk using one of these systems is just as illegal as driving drunk in a conventional car.

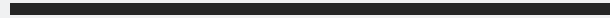
It is possible that the Autopilot feature saved the man's life—or the lives of others on the road at the time. Autopilot

requires the driver to keep his hands on the wheel. If the driver ignores the car's warnings to put his hands back on the wheel, it will come to a gradual stop. This could explain how the car wound up stopped on the Bay Bridge. Blocking traffic is bad, but the outcome could have been even worse if he'd fallen asleep behind the wheel of a car with no driver-assistance features.

Of course, that doesn't justify getting behind the wheel drunk. Even with Autopilot engaged, driving drunk is illegal and dangerous. The man should have called a cab, gotten a ride with a friend, or taken transit to get home.

In the next couple of years, we might see Waymo, GM's Cruise, and other companies

offer fully driverless car technologies. If those vehicles live up to the hype, then it really could be safe for people to get into those vehicles while intoxicated—though it might take time for state law to catch up.



# Promoted Comments

---

**Insightful** Smack- **JUMP**  
Fu Master, in **TO**  
training **POST**

**Gabara** wrote:

**Frodo  
Douchebags** wrote:

Rightly so.  
We're  
nowhere  
near the  
point where  
these  
systems are  
capable of  
carting  
around  
drunkards.

Hopefully we  
actually do get  
there soon.  
Tired of  
drunks  
running over  
kids and

hitting other drivers because they're certain that they're the chosen person that can drive drunk without anybody getting hurt.

I have a friend who's been a lawyer for about 30 years. Until recently, his main line of work had been getting hardship licenses for DUIs while they awaited their trials or whatever (the kind where you're only allowed to-from work, during certain hours, sometimes with an alcohol detector on the car). He said that since Uber/Lyft came around,



that line of work had dramatically tanked. We may be heading to that future with a stop along the way.

50 posts |  
registered 5/10/2016

---

**TIMOTHY B. LEE**

Timothy is a senior reporter covering tech policy, blockchain technologies and the future of transportation. He lives in Washington DC.

**EMAIL** [timothy.lee@arstechnica.com](mailto:timothy.lee@arstechnica.com) // **TWITTER** [@binarybits](https://twitter.com/binarybits)