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Uber Drops Driverless Car Tests in California After Fatal Crash in Arizona

If Uber chooses to restart its testing program in California, "Uber must apply for a new vehicle testing permit," state motor vehicle regulators said.

By Cheryl Miller | March 27, 2018

Following a fatal crash involving one of its autonomous vehicles in Arizona, Uber Technologies Inc. has told California regulators that the company will not renew its permit to test self-driving cars in the Golden State.

Uber's permit, which expires on March 31, covers 29 cars, according to the Department of Motor Vehicles.



An Uber car. Credit: Diego M. Radzinski / ALM

Uber voluntarily suspended its testing programs around the country and in Canada after one of its cars operating in **autonomous mode struck and killed a woman** (https://at.law.com/aSneXq?cmp=share_twitter) as she was crossing a Tempe, Arizona, road on the night of March 19.

In a letter sent Tuesday to an Uber executive, the DMV's chief counsel, Brian Soublet, said "Uber has indicated that it will not renew its current permit to test autonomous vehicles in California."

If Uber chooses to restart its testing program, "Uber must apply for a new vehicle testing permit," Soublet wrote in **a letter first reported in the San Francisco Chronicle** (https://www.sfchronicle.com/business/article/Uber-pulls-out-of-all-self-driving-car-testing-in-12785490.php?utm_campaign=twitter-premium&utm_source=CMS%20Sharing%20Button&utm_medium=social). "Any application for a new permit will need to address any follow-up analysis or investigations from the recent crash in Arizona and may also require a meeting with the department."

An Uber spokesperson said in a statement: "We proactively suspended our self-driving operations, including in California, immediately following the Tempe incident. Given this, we decided to not reapply for a California DMV permit with the understanding that our self-driving vehicles would not operate on public roads in the immediate future."

Uber has been under intense scrutiny following the fatal crash. The New York Times **reported Friday** (<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/23/technology/uber-self-driving-cars-arizona.html>) that the self-driving program was not meeting intense company deadlines and expectations for operation targets even before the crash.

On Monday, Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey, who wooed Uber to his state in 2016 with promises of a much less-regulated environment than California, **suspended the company from testing its autonomous vehicles** (<https://www.azcentral.com/story/opinion/op-ed/laurieroberts/2018/03/26/ducey-governor-who-gave-us-driverless-cars-suspends-uber-driverless-cars-but-isnt-he-guy-who/461024002/>) in his state, calling the onboard video of the Tempe crash “disturbing and alarming.”

Uber was once one of the biggest testers of autonomous vehicles in California. Recent figures for testing licenses show that companies such as Apple Inc., Tesla Inc. and Waymo Inc. had more test cars on California’s roads.

Uber’s Tempe crash has raised novel legal questions about who could be held liable for a car driving in autonomous mode. The Glendale, Arizona, firm Bellah Perez has said its lawyers have been retained by the victim’s daughter.

“By encouraging businesses like Uber to set up shop in Arizona, the state has hoped to be at the forefront of emerging technology and the sharing economy,” the firm said in a **statement** (<https://bellahperez.com/glendales-bellah-perez-pllc-retained-by-daughter-of-uber-accident-victim/>) on its website. “But the potentially drastic shift in accident liability associated with self-driving technology is causing many professionals to question the legal implications of the industry.”

The firm has not announced any legal action.

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