SELF-DRIVING CARS
How We Got Here & Where We’re Headed

SELF-DRIVING CARS REPRESENT AN IDEA THAT HAS BEEN AROUND FOR CENTURIES, DATING BACK TO LEONARDO DA VINCI’S SELF-PROPELLED CAR.  

SELF-DRIVING CARS ARE NOW RAPIDLY BECOMING A REALITY ON OUR ROADS. SO, HOW DID THE MORE MODERN INCARNATIONS OF SELF-DRIVING CARS COME INTO EXISTENCE?

A CONDENSED OVERVIEW OF MODERN SELF-DRIVING VEHICLES

- In 2004, the U.S. Department of Defense began funding autonomous vehicle research through the DARPA Grand Challenges.
- In 2009, Google announced its self-driving car project.
- In 2012, major vehicle manufacturers, including BMW, Ford and Mercedes-Benz, were testing self-driving vehicles.
- In 2013, Google released a report detailing a self-driving car that allows drivers to stay hands-free.
- In 2015, Tesla introduced its autopilot, a semi-autonomous system that allows drivers to keep their hands off.
- In 2016, I interpret testing to self-driving cars in Philadelphia.

FATALITIES IN AUTONOMOUS VEHICLE CRASHES

- January 2016 - A Tesla driver dies in China when the vehicle collides with a stationary truck.
- May 2016 - A Tesla driver dies in Florida in a crash with a tractor-trailer.
- March 2018 - A pedestrian is struck and killed by an Uber Volvo XC90 self-driving vehicle in Tempe, AZ.
- March 2018 - A Tesla driver crashes into a concrete barrier in Mountain View, California.

THE TECHNOLOGY MARCHES ON

Despite these tragedies, self-driving vehicle manufacturers are determined to move forward. Google said that by 2020, its self-driving car program, Waymo, will be able to offer one million self-driving rides a day. One consulting group recently said it believes that by 2025, up to 25% of the miles Americans travel on our roads will be in driverless vehicles. 

Meanwhile, Dr. Mark Rosekind, a former administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, has cautioned that the testing of autonomous vehicles will undoubtedly cost more lives. This is a technology worthy of continued attention, and perhaps added regulation to protect the safety of those on the road.

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