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Tesla Motors Model S car catches fire on road

Fiery battery thermal runaway occurred on October 1, 2013

Forbes' Hannah Elliott interviews Tesla's Communications Director

Non-answer to Elliott's key question about the precise nature of the so-called "large metallic object" that was supposedly struck by the car at highway speeds; Tesla claims that this purported object on the road was the proximate triggering cause for the ensuing thermal runaway conflagration that destroyed the front portion of the vehicle

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October 3, 2013

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Freeze-frame image of Oct. 1, 2013 Tesla Model S incident

JALOPNIK

Image below: freeze-frame from amateur video of incident shows entire front-end of Tesla Model S completely engulfed in flames



Incident video source URL: http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=q0kjl08n4fg

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Key take-aways

- ✓ Prior to 9:00 AM on Thursday, October 3, 2013 Lattice stated the following in a “Key take-aways” section on Slide #2 in a 23-slide PowerPoint referenced on slide #7 herein; quoting, “While Tesla’s theory of the incident is plausible, it is inconsistent with statements made by the highway patrol officer --- trained to be keenly observant --- who first investigated the accident scene and found no evidence whatsoever of any claimed ‘metallic debris’ ... Unless conclusive physical evidence is revealed that proves otherwise, Lattice believes it is more likely that the fire was caused by a spontaneous heat-event inside the battery”
- ✓ Later in the morning, staff writer Hannah Elliott of *Forbes* interviewed Elizabeth Jarvis-Shean, Tesla’s Director of Global Communications and published the resulting news story at 1:00 PM EST; excerpts of key passages from her article are provided in next three slides
- ✓ So far, Tesla’s official answers to Elliott’s very reasonable questions about key factual details involving this notable battery-related incident are neither timely nor adequate
- ✓ Consequently, the onus is still on Tesla to: (1) conclusively prove the existence of a “large metal object” that was lying on the road surface; (2) provide a detailed physical description of that particular object, presuming it exists and can be found; and (3) provide a detailed explanation as to how physical damage sustained from the vehicle impacting that specifically identified object could plausibly trigger the ensuing battery thermal runaway
- ✓ **If Tesla is unable to answer these crucial questions, Lattice’s conclusion still stands: it is more likely that the runaway was caused by a spontaneous heat-event inside the battery**

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Forbes' Hannah Elliott interviews Tesla spokesperson

Tesla's official statement asserts an impact with "large metallic object"

Forbes

Source URL: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/hannahelliott/2013/10/03/the-tesla-fire-is-a-textbook-pr-problem-and-they-should-fix-it/>



Hannah Elliott, Forbes Staff

I cover the fun stuff: High-end cars, watches, fashion and culture.

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The Tesla Fire Is A Textbook PR Problem - And They Should Fix It

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By now most Tesla-watchers have seen the [footage of the flaming Model S](#) in Seattle.

Quoting directly from *Forbes*:

Tesla has been mostly quiet on this front, releasing only this official response to the press:

"The fire was caused by the direct impact of a large metallic object to one of the 16 modules within the Model S battery pack. Because each module within the battery pack is, by design, isolated by fire barriers to limit any potential damage, the fire in the battery pack was contained to a small section in the front of the vehicle."

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Forbes' Hannah Elliott interviews Tesla spokesperson

Tesla provides no answers to questions about claimed “metallic object”

Source URL: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/hannahelliott/2013/10/03/the-tesla-fire-is-a-textbook-pr-problem-and-they-should-fix-it/>

Further quoting directly from *Forbes*:

Earlier today I spoke with Elizabeth Jarvis-Shean, Tesla's director of global communications, and while she described the mechanics of the accident to me (again, the official word is that the driver hit something big that punctured the battery pack and caused the fire, which was contained by Tesla technology) **she was unable to answer some key questions I had.**

Namely: What was the object? How was something so big able to apparently disappear from the site of the alleged crash? What recourse does the driver have under his ownership contract in terms of replacing his vehicle? Will Tesla replace it or refund him the \$50,000-plus he paid for it?

These were the answers I got to those and similar questions: “I can't really speak to that.” “I can't comment.” “I don't know at this point.”

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Forbes' Hannah Elliott interviews Tesla spokesperson

Tesla provides no answers to questions about claimed “metallic object”

Source URL: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/hannahelliott/2013/10/03/the-tesla-fire-is-a-textbook-pr-problem-and-they-should-fix-it/>

Further quoting directly from *Forbes*:

Tesla founder Elon Musk would not be commenting directly on the fire, she said.

This to me seems like an error. Wouldn't it be smarter in the long run to be actively up-front with the public and with journalists about just how exactly the company plans to respond to negative media coverage?

Wouldn't it be better to say, “We are doing this, this and this” to fix the problem and calm anxiety about the cars?

It has been a full day and a half since the accident – enough time to come up with more than two sentences emailed to journalists.

Lattice: Why won't Tesla provide detailed answers to journalists and investors?

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Relevant Lattice documents

Tesla Motors Model S battery thermal runaway fire that occurred on October 1, 2013:

“Tesla Motors Model S car catches fire on road – has the company’s luck run out?”

L. Larsen, Lattice Energy LLC, October 3, 2013 [23 slides - published prior to 9:00 AM on Thursday]

<http://www.slideshare.net/lewisglarsen/lattice-energy-llc-on-oct-1-tesla-model-s-caught-fire-on-highway-has-companys-luck-run-out-oct-3-2013>

Convergence of advanced batteries, energetic materials and LENRs:

“Large increases in battery energy densities drive convergence between energetic materials, LENRs and batteries”

L. Larsen, Lattice Energy LLC, September 6, 2013 [110 slides with detailed table of contents]

<http://www.slideshare.net/lewisglarsen/lattice-energy-llc-increased-energy-densities-drive-convergence-of-batteries-and-lenrs-sept-6-2013>

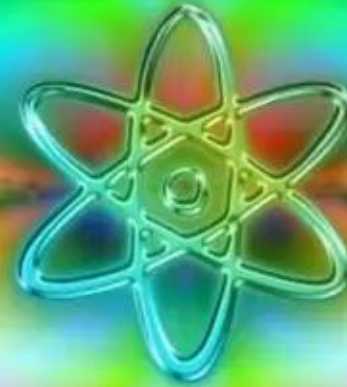
Document concerns great difficulties in containing and extinguishing thermal runaways:

“Systems to contain Lithium-based battery thermal runaways and fires; is it a feasible engineering goal or just a fool’s paradise?”

L. Larsen, Lattice Energy LLC, August 6, 2013 [93 slides – includes detailed table of contents]

<http://www.slideshare.net/lewisglarsen/lattice-energy-llc-containment-of-lithium-based-battery-fires-a-fools-paradise-aug-6-2013>

“Grow your tree of falsehood



from a single grain of truth.”

Czeslaw Milosz

Poem “Child of Europe” New York, 1946