

Providing Context to the Reporting of Tesla News

Press outlets have highlighted recent Tesla fires and fatalities, making it seem as if Tesla cars are inherently more dangerous than internal combustion engine cars. Many in the media are “reporting the facts,” but neglecting to put those facts in context. Are those crashes facts? Yes they are. But reporting facts without context is inherently misleading. An extreme example would be Hitler. Please bear with me, and I don’t mean to be insensitive with this example. The “fact” is Hitler was at one point was an artist. Yet if one only heard about how Hitler was an artist without the context of the terrible atrocities he committed, one would incorrectly assume he was a good guy. Something similar is happening with Tesla, and as Tesla supporters, it is up to us to help provide our friends and colleagues fair context.

Let’s put the context of Tesla’s crashes into the context of accidents and fire. According to the Association for Safe International Road Travel, there are 37,000 people that die in road crashes every year in America. Everyday, 100 sisters and brethren amongst us pass away from car accidents. Tesla, given that it has 200,000 cars on the road in the US, should expect to have one customer pass away every two weeks. Just looking at this year, only 4 people have died in Tesla accidents (an average of once every six weeks). Are we hearing about the tragic deaths of 100 people everyday? Surely not, as we would be inundated with an update on a traffic death once every 15 minutes (even as we sleep!) But when we see the media constantly report every Tesla accident and fatality, we are led to believe they are less safe when the opposite is true.

Same thing with fires. There are over 150,000 vehicle fires per year in the United States. We should hear about 400 car fires a day! But only the ~6-7 Tesla fires that happened this year are ever reported. If the reporting was equal, we should be bombarded every 4 minutes with news of a vehicle fire. If Tesla cars caught fire at the average rate, you would expect a Tesla fire once every three days! But on average, Tesla cars suffer a fire once every 3-4 weeks, indicating 10X less likelihood of catching fire. This is the type of context the news media never reports.

Ultimately, we can’t stop people from reporting the news. It’s freedom of speech that makes this country great. However, it is important for people to have context about the news they read, and understand how news outlets are being sensationalist with their coverage (intentionally or unintentionally). Please share this post with your friends, and together we can help readers better understand the context of what they are reading.