Tesla Unveils All-Wheel-Drive, Autopilot to Electric Cars

Luxury Auto Maker Joins Mercedes-Benz, Audi in Autonomous Drive Push

HAWTHORNE, Calif.—Tesla Motors Inc. unveiled an all-wheel-drive version of its Model S luxury electric car and an automated driving system designed to prevent accidents and even allow vehicles to park themselves.

The new autopilot features rely on a combination of radar, sonar and cameras that are able to recognize stop signs, pedestrians and highway barriers. Tesla Chief Executive Elon Musk said the self-driving features are already being installed in current production vehicles.

Tesla would begin delivering in December its top-of-the-line model equipped with twin electric engines, one for front-wheel drive and another for the rear wheels. Such all-wheel-drive configurations allow for better road handling, improves efficiency and boosts power and acceleration. Other models with all-wheel-drive will follow next year.

Amid cheers from Tesla owners on hand at Thursday’s unveiling, Mr. Musk said the dual-engine system takes slightly more than three seconds to go from a standing start to 60 miles an hour. The dual motor version of the Model S P85 would cost about $120,000 and be an about $14,600 option for other vehicles.

He also said the new autonomous driving feature will create “a protective cocoon around the vehicle” aimed at warning of impending collisions. The goal, he said, is for a driver to “step out of the car and have it park itself in your
A technology package with autopilot adds about $4,250 to the price of a Model S.

The product announcements came at a glitzy event here next to the company’s design studio, attended by nearly 3,000 Tesla owners, members of the media and other guests.

The automated driving features won’t make Tesla’s models fully autonomous, but Mr. Musk said the company was able to “bring it to market faster” than it had previously expected.

Drivers will get visual and sound warnings of an impending crash, and the car’s computers will attempt to take evasive action. Drivers will still be able to overcome the automated maneuvers.

Other auto brands including Mercedes-Benz, Acura and Audi have added new features that put the vehicle in control for short periods and the auto industry is shifting toward using these technologies to augment highway driving and parking.

Tesla’s system employs forward-looking radar to “see through” snow, fog, sand and other conditions that restrict the view of drivers. In addition, Mr. Musk said “long-range ultrasonic sonar” can detect “a small child or even a dog” in danger of being struck by the car.

Underscoring Tesla’s brand and environmental credentials, the company did something that few auto companies would probably contemplate. Attendees at the event were allowed to examine and order from a new line of Tesla handbags, cellphone covers and other items that sported the Tesla logo and are made from excess leather recycled from its Northern California assembly plant.

Answer these questions on a separate sheet of paper. The first two questions can be answered in 1-2 sentences. The third question needs a full-page, well thought out response.

1. Who is the intended audience for this article, and how do you know that?
2. What was the author’s purpose for writing this article, and how do you know that?
3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of this new technology (self-driving cars)?