

Info Alert

National Conference of State Legislatures Office of State-Federal Relations

NHTSA Releases Recommendations and Policy on Automated Vehicle Development June 4, 2013

On May 30, 2013, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) [released](#) a new policy related to advanced automated vehicle technology such as self-driving cars. The policy lays out the safety concerns and benefits for the new technology as well as institutes a four-year research study into the safety and feasibility of driver-less cars. NHTSA issued the policy as a means to help states when drafting legislation that would legalize the testing or use of self-driving cars. Currently California, Florida and Nevada are testing the technology in their state and multiple other states are considering allowing testing as well.

The policy lists a number of recommendations to states regarding the testing, regulating and licensing of automated vehicles including to only allow vehicle testing prior to the completion of NHTSA's new four-year study; ensure proper understanding by owners of how to operate the vehicles; recommend the manner in which to appropriately handle on-road testing of the vehicles with minimum risk to other drivers; and establish reporting requirements for monitoring the self-driving cars during the phases of testing.

The [NHTSA statement](#) also attempts to define the different levels of vehicle automation through a classification rating system (Level 0 - Level 4). A Level 0 car is classified as "no-automation" where the driver is in complete control while Level 4 is "full self-driving automation" in which a driver is not expected to be in control at all during the trip.

While NHTSA's new policy focuses mainly on the safety of such advanced technology, it also mentions the environmental benefits of automated vehicles including fuel conservation and the reduced risk of vehicle accidents, which can in turn cause traffic congestion and higher fuel consumption.

Additionally, on April 23 NHTSA [released](#) another set of guidelines, these pertaining to in-vehicle electronic distractions, such as dashboard video displays and entertainment devices, one of the major causes of on-road accidents today. The voluntary guidelines, aimed at automobile manufacturers, recommend disabling certain operations of the devices unless the vehicle is stopped or parked and limiting the time a driver may take their eyes off of the road. The guidelines are part of NHTSA's on-going work to reduce distracted driving.

If you have any additional questions or concerns on any of NHTSA's policies please contact [Ben Husch](#) (202-624-7779), [Melanie Condon](#) (202-624-3597) or [Anne Teigen](#) (303-856-1652).