

Tesla cars to be fully self-drivable

DETROIT

But company won't turn the system on until it undergoes further testing

BY BILL VLASIC

Tesla Motors has said that it will equip all of its new vehicles with technology that enables fully autonomous driving but will not activate the system until it undergoes further testing.

In a blog post, the maker of electric cars said the new hardware included cameras, sensors and radars that would allow the vehicles to operate without a human driver.

The company said the technology would be installed in all of its models, including the much-anticipated Model 3 sedan, which is expected to reach the United States market next year.

"We are excited to announce that, as of today, all Tesla vehicles produced in our factory — including Model 3 — will have the hardware needed for full self-driving capability," the company said.

Tesla's chief executive, Elon Musk, had been hinting in recent weeks that the company was eager to improve upon its existing Autopilot feature, which assists drivers rather than controls the vehicle entirely.

Federal regulators have been investigating the safety of the Autopilot system since the driver of a Model S sedan was killed on May 7 in Florida.

The vehicle, operating in Autopilot mode, collided with a white tractor-trailer, which the system failed to recognize because of bright sunlight.

Tesla recently announced improvements to the Autopilot feature that Mr. Musk has said would have prevented the Florida accident.

But the company now appears to be moving beyond systems that assist human drivers, to newer technology that

enables fully autonomous driving.

"It looks like Tesla's Autopilot features are that much closer to actually being a true Autopilot and not just a name for a suite of autonomous features," said Akshay Anand, an analyst with the automotive research firm Kelley Blue Book.

The Tesla blog post said that although the hardware would be installed in all new vehicles, the fully autonomous driving system would not be enabled until more testing was performed.

"Before activating the features enabled by the new hardware, we will further calibrate the system using millions of miles of real-world driving," the company said, without announcing a specific timetable.

Tesla is undergoing a significant expansion with the addition of the Model 3, which will be priced at \$35,000.

The company is ratcheting up production of the Model 3 at its California plant, and expects to begin filling more than 300,000 pre-orders sometime next year.