

Tesla owner asks for \$1 million after Model X caught on fire in crash and Falcon Wing doors wouldn't open

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Tesla is currently investigating an accident that happened in February in Guangzhou where a Model X crashed on the highway and caught on fire. The owner of the vehicle and her boyfriend were sitting in the second-row seat and they claim that the Falcon Wing doors were not opening after the crash resulting in them being stuck in the backseat while the car was starting to catch on fire.

They managed to exit through the front door just as the vehicle went up in flames, but not without injuries and now they are asking Tesla for 8 million Chinese yuan (~\$1 million) in compensation.

Tesla China issued a statement about the accident following the owner's demand (translated from Chinese):

“First of all, the lives of the owner and passengers were not threaten. We are working closely with the department concerned. The distribution of the debris at the site and the damage all indicate that this was a high-speed crash – in this case, not just electric cars, but any vehicle can catch on fire. In fact, another car involved in the accident (a fuel-powered vehicle) also caught on fire. Fuel tank fire incidents happen much more often than the electric car fires.

In addition, Tesla has consistently insisted on the disclosure and transparency of information, including other information about the incident, such as the owner is asking us for 8 million yuan, and we will not accept.”

Here are a few pictures of the aftermath (credits to Steven Liu):







In an open letter published this week on Cartek's [WeChat](#), Lee Tada, the owner of the Model X, gave her account of the accident.

She explained that her chauffeur was driving her and her boyfriend at ~75 km/h northbound on the highway in Guangzhou when they hit the concrete siderails, the car turned around 180-degrees and was hit front first by a Ford Focus.

They then tried to open the Falcon Wing doors, but she says that they were both stuck.

Side note: There's actually an emergency latch to open the Falcon Wing doors if the button doesn't work. It's hidden behind the speaker cover, but as we learn while researching this story, this information is surprisingly not in the owner's manual but in the emergency response guide, which is for

first responders (**update:** it's not in [the online owner manual](#), but it's in the [version in the car](#)):



Therefore, it's understandable that someone being driven around in the Model X wouldn't know about it.

Back to her story. They started to hear the battery cells explode and managed to exit through the front door. A few seconds later, the Model X went up in flames.

Here's a video of the aftermath (warning it's graphic – and vertical):

<https://youtu.be/ztOSChyNtVM>

In the open letter, the owner says that she suffered a broken nose and a severe cut to her lower lip that needed a dozen stitches, but the driver got the worst of it. She wrote that “he was hospitalized for more than 40 days with internal injuries and fractures”.

Beyond the physical injuries, she added: “it brought us more serious mental harm, after the accident and still today, I often have nightmares about being burned to death inside the Tesla Model X.

It’s apparently what led her to ask Tesla for 8 million Chinese yuan (~\$1 million) in compensation, which Tesla China is refusing to pay, but they are still investigating the accident and collaborating with the local authorities.

Tesla has been under scrutiny before over several instances of vehicles catching on fire. The media made a big deal out of it despite the fact that almost every instance happened after a high-speed accident, like this one. Statistics showed that Tesla’s vehicles caught fire significantly less often than the national average and NHTSA eventually [conducted an investigation and found no problem](#).

But on other occasions, Tesla’s vehicles caught fire without being involved in an impact, like [a Model S catching on fire during a test drive event in France](#), [another one in Norway burned down while Supercharging](#), and more recently, [a Model S caught fire in Yorkshire, but Tesla linked it to a crash 2 months before the fire](#).