

DAMON LAVRINC

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In Automotive First, Tesla Pushes Over-the-Air Software Patch

In the future, your automobile will be locked in the same cycle of never-ending software upgrades that holds sway over computers and smartphones. For Tesla Model S owners, the future is now.



IMAGE: TESLA



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Over 100 Model S drivers will receive the auto industry's first ever over-the-air operating system update for their new sedans within the next two weeks, Tesla says. In addition to a handful of minor code changes, the mandatory upgrade to 1.9.11 will tweak the range calculator to lower the car's estimated driving range by 35 miles.

"Some changes may contribute to the safety parameters of the car or make material improvements to the technology," adds Tesla spokeswoman Shanna Hendriks. "Some changes will provide the driver the option to control/turn off any added new features -- such as idle creep."

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Model S owners will notice an alarm clock icon at the top of the sedan's 17-inch touchscreen alerting them of the update, and according to Tesla, the owner can schedule the software modification for a time of their choosing. The Model S has to be parked to perform the upgrade and Tesla says the software push should take around two hours to complete. If the Model S is plugged in, charging will pause until the update is done, and then resume immediately. There is no way for drivers to opt out of the upgrade.

While both [Mercedes-Benz](#) and [Chrysler](#) have announced plans to perform over-the-air updates to select models next year, Tesla will be the first automaker to issue an update using either the embedded 3G data connection in the car or a WiFi signal provided by the driver's home internet connection.

The software push brings to cars the sometimes frustrating technological rite of the software patch. Once carried out over physical media, if at all, the internet turned upgrades into a standard part of the computing experience. Microsoft Windows users, for example, are accustomed to the second Tuesday of the month delivering a new bundle of security patches. Mac OS X normally checks for software updates from Apple every week.

With embedded data connections and on-board WiFi, the over-the-air upgrade path has been edging closer to the automotive industry with each new vehicle launch, as automakers strive to deliver more functionality to a generation of auto-buyers who've grown up with connected gadgets.

The major feature of Tesla's reworked software will be replacing the Rated Range in Max Range mode, which is currently set at 300 miles. The new Rated Range will reflect the EPA's 5-cycle test, which rated the Model S at 265 miles.

As [we detailed in our review](#), there are two displayed ranges on the Model S: the Rated Range, which is based on ideal driving conditions, and the Projected Range, which utilizes data from the last 30 miles driven to determine approximately how far the driver can go on the current charge. This new Rated Range algorithm is more aggressive, and according to the automaker, "means your Rated Range will be easier to 'beat' with efficient driving and will be more accurate given spirited driving."

Tesla also points out that this update will not affect the storage or driving abilities of the Model S.

The two minor, consumer-facing features of the update include the ability to display only projected or rated range in the customizable instrument panel behind the steering wheel. The other feature is a new entry/exit protocol that will turn on the instrument panel and touchscreen when any door is opened (previously this was limited to the driver's door), and the previously played audio track resuming automatically, but beginning at a lower volume. When leaving the vehicle, the volume will descend and all the displays will stay on until the last door is closed.

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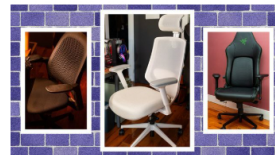
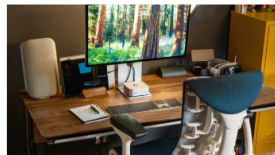
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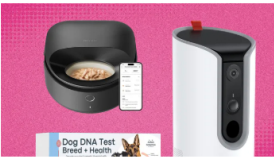
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