



CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER
JIMMY PATRONIS
STATE OF FLORIDA

October 7, 2022

Mr. Jack Danielson
Executive Director
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE.
West Building
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Executive Director Jack Danielson:

The State Fire Marshal's Office is in need of immediate guidance regarding the response to fires produced by electric vehicles (EVs) that are compromised as a result of lithium batteries corroding from exposure to salt water. As you are aware, Hurricane Ian impacted Southwest Florida, which shoved an immense amount of salty ocean water into coastal Southwest Florida. Based on initial research by my office, it appears, that much of the guidance on submerged vehicles does *not* address specific risks associated with exposure of EVs to saltwater.

On October 6th, I joined North Collier Fire Rescue to assess response activities related to Hurricane Ian and saw with my own eyes an EV continuously ignite, and continually reignite, as fireteams doused the vehicle with tens-of-thousands of gallons of water. Subsequently, I was informed by the fire department that the vehicle, once again reignited when it was loaded onto the tow truck. Based on my conversations with area firefighters, this is not an isolated incident. As you can appreciate, I am very concerned that we may have a ticking time bomb on our hands.

As the federal entity charged with overseeing the safety of motorized vehicles on American roads, I am requesting the following information:

1. Has NHTSA directed EV companies to immediately communicate with consumers on dangers related to a vehicle impacted by storm surge? Can the agency make that information available to my office so that we can distribute?
2. Do the personal protective equipment (PPE), including the gas masks utilized by fire rescue teams, effectively protect first responders from poisonous gases?
3. Do search teams need to create specific missions for immediate removal of EVs by secondary responders?
4. Is there research or guidance as to the timeline by which corrosion may lead to fires?
5. Is there any guidance, or specific designated locations, where compromised EVs should be taken to burn-out? Have federal authorities been sharing that information with secondary responders, like tow truck operators?

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I am requesting an official response to my office that can be distributed to stakeholders by no later than Friday, October 14. In my experience, Southwest Florida has a significant number of EVs in use, and if those EVs were left behind, exposed to storm surge, and sitting in garages, there is a risk of fires. As the State Fire Marshal, I must ensure local fire teams have access to all the equipment needed for these operations, including Tender Strike Teams, Engine Strike Teams, PPE and thermal imagery. Your responses may be the difference between life and death.

Please contact my office at (850) 413-2850.

Sincerely,



Jimmy Patronis
Chief Financial Officer

CC: Congressional Oversight Committee Chair Frank Pallone, Jr.