



Rick Staly, Sheriff

FLAGLER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

"An honor to serve, a duty to protect."

NEWS RELEASE

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'Smart Car' Operating on Autopilot Backs Into FCSO Patrol Vehicle

On Friday, March 19, 2021, a Flagler County Sheriff's Office (FCSO) deputy conducted a traffic stop on a white 2018 Tesla when he observed it traveling on the wrong side of the road after exiting the Wawa gas station located on State Rod 100 in Palm Coast, FL.



The car complied, came to a stop and then proceeded to back into the deputy's patrol vehicle.

The deputy made contact with the vehicle and discovered two juveniles (14 and 15 years of age), one in the backseat and one in the front passenger seat. No one was seated in the driver's seat.

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When questioned, the juveniles told deputies that they were traveling from Charleston, South Carolina to visit one of the juvenile's fathers. Both juveniles were asked who was operating the motor vehicle and they stated the vehicle was a Tesla and that it was driving itself in autopilot mode when it backed in to the patrol car.

However, it was later determined that one of the juveniles was operating the vehicle before putting it in autopilot, causing the crash.

FCSO made contact with the parents of both juveniles. The driver's mother was unaware of her daughter leaving the state, and thought she was at her grandmother's house. Due to time and distance, the parents of the juveniles were both unable to pick up their daughters that evening.

While there was no damage to the FCSO vehicle, there was \$300 in damage to the Tesla. The juvenile driver was given a citation for driving without a license.

"These kids are very lucky that no one was hurt and their actions didn't have more serious consequences," Sheriff Rick Staly said. "It doesn't matter if you are driving a 'smart car', driving without a license is still against the law. I hope these kids have learned a valuable lesson and I am grateful that no one was hurt and only minimal damage occurred to their vehicle."

The juveniles were transported to the Flagler County Palm Coast District 2 Office to meet with a DCF investigator and left in DCF's custody.

Footage of the incident can be seen here: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/12CJZxcz1qoDn-V0ELgd0UwXg1gwFSQ9t/view?usp=sharing>

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