



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**National
Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration**

ODI RESUME

OFFICE OF DEFECTS INVESTIGATION

Investigation: PE25010

Prompted By: VOQ Review

Date Opened: 09/15/2025

Investigator: Justin Smith

Reviewer: Gregory Magno

Approver: Tanya Topka

Subject: Electronic door handles become inoperative

MANUFACTURER & PRODUCT INFORMATION

Manufacturer: Tesla, Inc.

Products: 2021 Tesla Model Y

Population: 174,290 (Estimated)

Problem Description: Electronic door handles become inoperative due to low battery voltage in the vehicle (12VDC low voltage battery), impeding vehicle reentry.

FAILURE REPORT SUMMARY

	ODI	Manufacturer	EWR D&I	Other	Total	EWR Field Reports
All Incidents:	9	0	0	0	9	0
Crashes/Fires:	0	0	0	0	0	0
Injury Incidents:	0	0	0	0	0	0
Number of Injuries:	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fatality Incidents:	0	0	0	0	0	0
Number of Fatalities:	0	0	0	0	0	0

ACTION/SUMMARY INFORMATION

Action: Open Preliminary Evaluation (PE)

Summary:

The Office of Defects Investigation (ODI) has received nine Vehicle Owners Questionnaires (VOQs) reporting an inability to open doors on Model Year (MY) 2021 Tesla Model Y vehicles. The most commonly reported scenarios involved parents exiting the vehicle after a drive cycle in order to remove a child from the back seat or placing a child in the back seat before starting a drive cycle. In those events, the parents were unable to reopen a door to regain access to the vehicle. Four of

these VOQs reported resorting to breaking a window to regain entry into the vehicle. Although Tesla vehicles have manual door releases inside of the cabin, in these situations, a child may not be able to access or operate the releases even if the vehicle's driver is aware of them. As a result, in these instances, an occupant who remains inside a vehicle in this condition may be unable to be rapidly retrieved by persons outside of the vehicle. Entrapment in a vehicle is particularly concerning in emergency situations, such as when children are entrapped in a hot vehicle. For awareness, NHTSA has a Child Heatstroke Campaign that highlights the dangers to children entrapped in hot vehicles.

Based on ODI's preliminary review, this condition appears to occur when the electronic door locks receive insufficient voltage from the vehicle. Available repair invoices report replacement of the vehicle's low voltage battery after the incident. However, no VOQs reported seeing a low voltage battery warning prior to the exterior door handles becoming inoperative.

The Tesla Owner's Manual "Jump Starting" and "Opening the Hood with No Power" sections describe a multi-step process for restoring power to the electronic door locks in order to enable their operation from outside of the vehicle. This process requires applying 12 volts DC from a separate power source to two different points accessible from the vehicle's exterior. The subject incidents suggest that this process may not be readily available to owners or well known. For instances where an occupant is able to access and operate interior door handles, the Tesla Owner's Manual "Opening Doors with No Power" section identifies the manual door releases inside of the vehicle's cabin.

ODI is opening this Preliminary Evaluation (PE) to assess the scope and severity of this condition, including the risks that arise from the conditions reported in the VOQs. This investigation will also assess the approach used by Tesla to supply power to the door locks and the reliability of the applicable power supplies. At this time, NHTSA's investigation is focused on the operability of the electronic door locks from outside of the vehicle as that circumstance is the only one in which there is no manual way to open the door. The agency will continue to monitor any reports of entrapment involving opening doors from inside of the vehicle, and ODI will take further action as needed.

To review the ODI reports cited in the Opening Resume and the ODI Report Identification Number document, go to [NHTSA.gov](https://www.nhtsa.gov).