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New Evidence Seems To Show A Tesla Model 3 Fender/Frame Rust Issue



SEP 27, 2019 at 2:57PM

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By: Gustavo Henrique Ruffo

There are a lot of Model 3s with this problem and none of these cars were in accidents.

Journalism is very much like assembling a puzzle. You start with the edges and their flat sides, then you look for similar patterns and put the pieces that have them together. Sometimes, there are missing pieces you just find a little later. After some effort, you get the whole picture.

We cannot say we already have a completed puzzle in the [Tesla Model 3 fender/frame rust issue](#), but this article will get our readers and us closer to it. Even if there are missing pieces.

➤ Check out lots of images of Tesla Model 3 affected by this rust issue:

Gallery: Tesla Model 3 Rust



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This story started with a video from Matt Shumaker reporting a bizarre problem on his Model 3. The left front fender was touching the frame of the car, at the lower end of the A-pillar. We wrote an article about that, mostly asking for people to report similar situations.

More Tesla Model 3 Rust Issue News:



The article went viral, and readers started getting in touch. Some were telling us that the car had suffered two accidents, one of which could be the cause for the rust. Some were trying to teach us how to do our jobs, asking for statistics and the relevance of that issue. Why even report it? They would not ask that if their cars were involved, for sure.



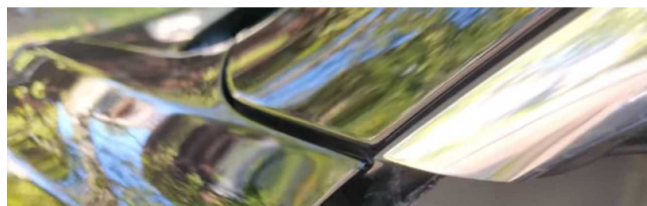
We searched Shumaker's YouTube channel for info on the accidents, and it was all there. It was not like he wanted to hide anything. He just did not mention them. No other reader reported having a similar problem, so we wrote an article calling it quits if new evidence did not emerge. Well, it did.

Joni Savolainen sent us an email reporting other similar cases. If you are not aware who this Finnish guy is, he is the one Model 3 owner that discovered his car's paint was too thin and soft. It is a matter that affects more people than you would probably believe. Their Facebook group reached 1,000 members already. Do you remember Graham Stephan, who made a video saying he got his Model 3 for free? Check the video below. And who the car owner is.



Now we understand why Stephan got his car wrapped apart from saving money on special paint.

That was what Savolainen was trying to handle with Tesla when he came to InsideEVs. "I have been investigating these issues for four months now, almost five. My car is a little over 10,000 km, but it looks like a 200,000-km car. Or even above that. I went to Tesla more than ten times to get the problems solved, and they deny everything," Savolainen told InsideEVs. "I have only discovered this A-pillar issue after reading your article, hence the video."





Formerly a big fan of Tesla, Savolainen defines his current situation as infuriating. "Build quality issues are valid complaints. I am sad to see customers have to fight against manufacturing defects that are so obvious. I thought Tesla was an agile company. That is why I bought this car. But check how they treat their customers. It's frustrating."

Savolainen was not the only one to report that in video. Shumaker also decided to record another one to debunk the ones that tried to say he fabricated the whole thing or ignored the accidents that could have caused it on purpose. Here's what he has to say about that.



It is a pity we did not get to talk to Shumaker before, but he was kind enough to address us in this video and to answer our doubts. He had to block comments on his previous video due to all the garbage people decided to write there. Unfortunately, supportive and clarifying comments also got lost in the process. Even if not all of them.

Shumaker says one of his viewers thinks the issue has to do with the car design. There is a side screw to fix the fenders to the frame – sorry we said they were welded. The sense in which you fasten it would bring the upper corner of the left fender closer to the A-pillar. On the other hand, it would put it a little further away from the frame on the right side. Check it on the images below.

(click to enlarge photo)



Verify for yourself. All Model 3 units with the problem present it just on the left side. Probably even the ones that are right-hand drive. We still received no complaints from British or Australian customers, but we are afraid they will eventually show up.



We would surely be willing to "print" a retraction for what we said about Shumaker's rust issue. But there is a problem: people would still attack the story because of the bumps his car unfortunately had.

That said, we'd advise Shumaker to look for a technical inspection that can certify his car's rusting issue has no relation to the front impact. He would then have a document proving this. We would publish it and the retraction gladly. We have no problems in admitting we were wrong.

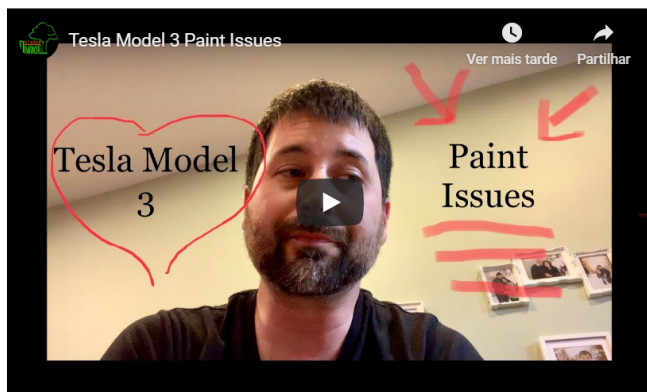


admitting we were wrong.



Decide for yourself if the issue on his car originated with its bumped front end. If we had to rely on his case, we would probably just forget about it due to the difficulty in proving anything. We would know, but would not be able to demonstrate.

Besides a technical inspection, another option Shumaker has is to go directly to Tesla and ask it to admit the issue. A warranty repair would come as a consequence, but that would probably not work. Savolainen tried it with the paint issue. Roger-Pierre Gravel probably also did this. We are attempting to get the company to answer our questions, to no avail. Brent Chaisson is just tired of trying, as you can see in the video below:



That is almost an emotional video. You can see Chaisson's disappointment. He says he was an advocate for electric cars. He took delivery of his Model 3 on July 23, 2018, and issues were at his door for Christmas. Santa, we believe he has not asked for that gift.

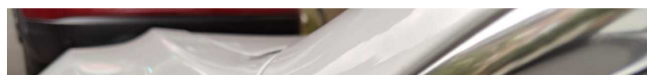
Shumaker said he first reported the issue, but Chaisson's video is from June 2019. That makes him the very first person that we are aware of to go public and show the rust on the frame. We may find owners that warned about it even earlier when the news spreads.



Like Shumaker, Chaisson just loves his Model 3, but he feels he cannot recommend anyone buying it until its problems are solved. Because he does not want anyone to go through the same issues he has faced so far.

Anonymous

At least one person we have interviewed preferred to stay anonymous, especially after having appeared in previous reports without his consent. "Since my professional career also depends on my online reputation, I really like to avoid flooding the web with news articles when people search for my service or look me up." Fair enough.



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What we could not avoid was telling his story. "I had plenty of trouble with Tesla and the handover. In my case, there was no quality control in the service center at all. The car came basically directly from the truck. It was not washed. The interior lamp of the back seats was missing - only a cable was hanging from the roof - and plenty of other things had to be fixed before I was able to leave."

Do you remember [Tyson Park](#)? He is a former Tesla employee that used to work on Delivery. And he reported receiving cars from Fremont that were impossible to deliver without servicing. Much like what this anonymous Tesla owner says he had to go through.



Little did he know that it was just the beginning. "About three months after the handover, my car started to rust. Since it is white, it was easy to spot the issue while the driver door was open."

Our anonymous reader met other Model 3 owners with the same problem. "I've seen it at least on four other Model 3. They all have been between 200000 to 240000 VINs. I am not sure if other series were also affected, but all these cars had the same issue: the panel was touching the frame at the driver's A-pillar, while the passenger side was always fine."



This Tesla client was not aware of the screws on the front fenders when he talked to us, but he already had a theory to explain it. "For me, it looks like a serial production failure. The driver door line of sight is also following the misaligned fender. With that, the left rear door also doesn't fit well, and it rubs on the inside." The images above show that.





Anonymous is probably one of the only people that managed to get the issue solved by Tesla. "They just recognized the case and told me I should reach out to one of their service partner body shops because they can't handle it in the service center. Once one of them provides a quote with cost indication, Tesla has to approve it before it is solved."

⚡ Tesla enemies?

Chaisson, Savolainen, and Shumaker had no issues going public about their cars' problems. And we thank them for that, but we would perfectly understand if they would rather not. They are not dealing solely with Tesla's resistance to acknowledge the vehicles have production and design defects, but because of all the Tesla community bashing they are facing.



Shumaker said in the embedded video he is under accusations of being a short or a Tesla hater. Some think he and the other affected owners should just pay for the damages in their cars and leave it alone. Not because it is their fault, as Tesla has told them, but because the EV maker would need the help.

These guys believe Tesla does not have enough money to pay for all the issues in all the cars it delivered. They think this would lead the company to bankruptcy. Summing up, anyone that points to problems with the vehicles or with the company is an enemy – a short, willing to make money from the company's demise. Ironically, Tesla haters say the very same thing.



Some of the people we have tried to interview declined to do so because of that. They do not want to be seen as Tesla enemies.

The ones that decide to act as consumers and not as fan club members get insults. Or insinuations that they have hidden agendas to destroy Tesla. We are no exception, despite the obvious stupidity that it would be for a company that is called insideEVs and that covers... electric cars!





Tesla has practically made EVs the reality we now have. It is due to Tesla that Volkswagen decided to go from diesel cars and nitrous oxides to batteries. Attacking it to make money with short selling or praising it to make money with the company's success would not only be stupid. It would be unethical. That is precisely why we at InsideEVs are forbidden to have stocks from any EV company, not only Tesla.

We are journalists. And "news is what someone does not want you to print. All the rest is advertising," whoever has said that - it was not George Orwell, apparently. When we have relevant stories to cover, we must get them published. Simple as that.

There are people that need to be aware of the issues. People willing to buy a used Model 3 that have to pay attention to these problems. Owners that have not noticed it yet and that need to as soon as possible.



Paul Paterson was one of them. "After seeing your story on the person with rust on the driver's side A-pillar, I had a look at my Model 3. It was purchased in June 2019. It was apparent that the fender panel was in contact with the body of the car on the driver's side. The passenger side has a slight gap."

