Here’s what happens when cops pull over a driverless Cruise vehicle

It’s been a little over two months since Cruise started letting the people of San Francisco catch rides on its driverless robotaxis, and one of its cars already had a run-in with police. In a video originally posted to Instagram last weekend, the user captures the awkward – and somewhat comical – interaction between the San Francisco Police Department and the autonomous vehicle after it’s pulled over for not having its lights on.

After stopping the Chevy Bolt-turned-Cruise vehicle, a police officer goes up to its window, tries to (unsuccessfully) open the door, and starts walking back to his cruiser. The autonomous vehicle begins to drive away in what at first seems like the perfect start to a police chase, but then pulls over and puts its hazards on at a point farther down the road. Police drive up behind the vehicle once again, get out of the car, and then hover around the vehicle as they presumably try to figure out how to turn its headlights back on.

As Cruise spokesperson Aaron Mclear explained to *The Verge*, the autonomous vehicle didn’t drive away to escape from police – it was trying to find a safer location to pull over in, a move that most human drivers can’t get away with so easily. Mclear also confirmed that the SFPD pulled over the vehicle for not having its headlights on, and says Cruise has since fixed the issue.

“The vehicle yielded to the police car, then pulled over to the nearest safe location for the traffic stop,” Mclear said.

“An officer contacted Cruise personnel and no citation was issued. We work closely with the SFPD on how to interact with our vehicles and have a dedicated phone number for them to call in situations like this.”

Cruise, a subsidiary of General Motors, uses LIDAR technology to power its vehicles’ self-driving capabilities. The company has been using the cars to shuttle around its San Francisco-based employees since 2017, but only just opened a waiting list to taxi the city’s general population.

We still don’t know what exactly caused the Cruise vehicle to operate without its headlights. Perhaps the car’s automatic headlights feature was disabled or failed to detect the darkness around it. Either way, it is a bit concerning. Cruise vehicles are only authorized to drive from 10PM to 6AM, which obviously makes headlights pretty important.

In 2018, a self-driving Uber vehicle struck and killed a pedestrian walking her bike across the road in Tempe, Arizona. Subsequent investigations from the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) found that Uber turned off Volvo’s factory emergency braking system to prevent any interaction with Uber’s self-driving software, but it’s unclear whether that contributed to the crash.

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