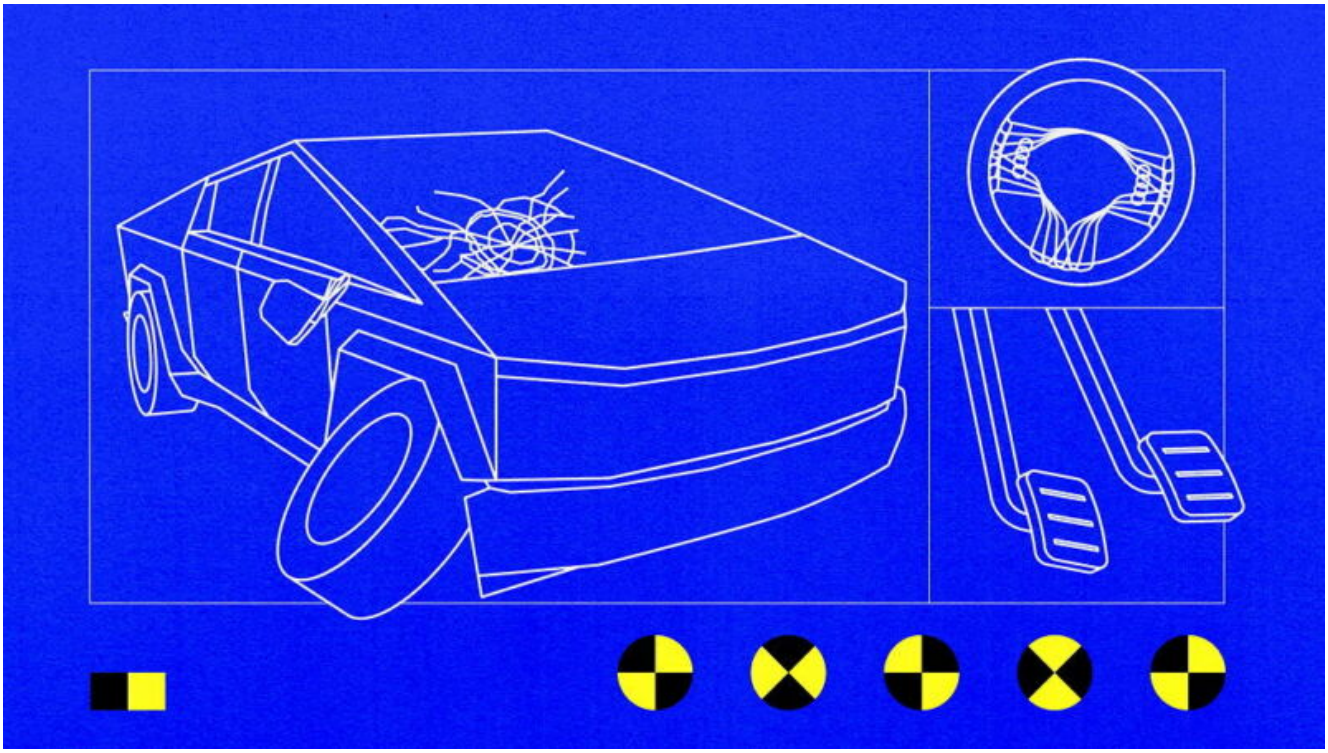
Leaked Tesla report shows Cybertruck had basic design flaws



Jacqui VanLiew; Getty Images

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In November 2019, Tesla CEO Elon Musk stepped onto a stage in California to launch a new kind of EV: the Cybertruck, an angular cyberpunk-styled pickup with bodywork made of brushed stainless steel and “unbreakable” glass. What happened next has entered into public relations folklore. Under the glare of the cameras, the demo truck’s windows smashed not once, but twice during a demonstration of their strength. Musk first swore, then joked: “There’s room for improvement.” That off-the-cuff remark could have been a fitting mantra for the entire project.

Not that this faltering start has deterred Tesla's devoted fans, of course. Since then, an estimated 1.8 million customers have put down their $100 deposits to reserve a Cybertruck. The vehicle was supposed to start rolling off production lines in 2021. But two years on, the trucks still haven't been delivered, and for most customers, they won't be until 2024 at the earliest.

WIRED

In May, the German newspaper *Handelsblatt* began reporting on the "Tesla Files": thousands of internal documents provided to it by a whistleblower. Among those documents was an engineering report that might give some insight into why the vehicle has taken so long to come to market. The report, dated January 25, 2022, which WIRED has examined, shows that the preproduction "alpha" version of the Cybertruck was still struggling with some basic problems with its suspension, body sealing, noise levels, handling, and braking.

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"Been driving latest Cybertruck prototype around Giga, Texas," Musk tweeted on January 26, 2022. "It's awesome!"

The contents of the report do not deal a fatal blow to the Cybertruck. As one veteran automotive engineer, who spoke on condition of anonymity to prevent backlash from Tesla fans, says, the company has enormous financial resources which will allow it to address the issues detailed in the report. However, he said, "my first reaction is I am astounded. These are classic mechanical automotive engineering challenges that you have in pretty much any vehicle. I'm blown away that they would be struggling so much with the basics."

Tesla hasn't launched a new consumer vehicle since 2020, and it's widely seen as falling behind other automakers, who have stepped up their EV development to meet surging demand. Most car companies refresh their lineup every three to five

years—Tesla's Model S is now more than 10 years old. Audi, by comparison, expects to launch more than 20 new cars by 2026. But while analysts say that finally producing the Cybertruck will be mostly a symbolic victory for Tesla—which still must nail the launch of new battery packs, roll out *safe* Full Self-Driving software globally, and build a truly affordable car—the delays still matter. The hype machine needs new products.

"You need something new to reinvigorate the story. Whether that's the humanoid robot, the Tesla Semi, the Cybertruck, Full Self-Driving, all of those are fair game in the eyes of the Tesla PR machine to keep the narrative going about continued growth," says Jeffrey Osborne, a managing director and senior research analyst who covers Tesla at the financial services firm Cowen. "The logical [first] one of all of those is the Cybertruck."

Tesla did not respond to requests for comment.

The internal dynamics and NVH—noise, vibration, and harshness—report leaked to *Handelsblatt* contains test results measuring the performance of the alpha version of the Cybertruck against projections made using computer-aided design (CAD) simulations, and against internal benchmarks. In summary, it presents a picture of a prototype vehicle that's leaky, noisy, and has poor handling and braking.

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