

Tesla working to resolve dispute with Walmart over solar panel fires



Enlarge / Fire damage on the roof of a Walmart store in Indio, California.

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Walmart and Tesla are actively negotiating to resolve the lawsuit Walmart filed against Tesla earlier this week over defective solar panels, the two companies said in a joint statement sent out on Thursday evening.

“Walmart and Tesla look forward to addressing all issues and re-energizing Tesla solar installations at Walmart stores, once all parties are certain that all concerns have been addressed,” the statement said. The companies say they’re both committed to a “sustainable energy future” as well as safety and efficiency.

Spokespeople for Tesla and Walmart declined to provide any further details about the state of the negotiations, but it’s not hard to guess what happened. The optics of Walmart suing Tesla over multiple fires on its store roofs were not good for Tesla. Tesla wants the public—and potential customers—to know that it’s now working to address Walmart’s concerns.

Walmart filed its Tuesday lawsuit after suffering a series of seven fires since 2012 on stores with solar panels on them. The solar panels were installed by Tesla’s solar panel subsidiary, which was a separate company called SolarCity until that business was acquired by Tesla in 2016. Walmart claimed on Tuesday that its investigation revealed “widespread, systemic negligence” in Tesla’s installation and maintenance of solar panels. Walmart also charged that Tesla had dragged its feet in addressing the problems Walmart identified or compensating Walmart for the damage.

Walmart had asked the court to order the removal of all Tesla solar panels from its stores, but now the companies say they’re working toward a deal to keep the panels in place, repair them, and begin using them again.

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