

United States Senate

October 13, 2022

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

Major Hurricane Ian's landfall in Southwest Florida brought torrential rains, devastating winds, and destructive storm surge, decimating several coastal communities and wreaking havoc as it moved across much of the state. In addition to the damage caused by the storm itself, the saltwater flooding in several coastal areas has had further destructive consequences in the aftermath of Hurricane Ian by causing the lithium ion batteries in flooded electric vehicles (EVs) to spontaneously combust and catch fire. This emerging threat has forced local fire departments to divert resources away from hurricane recovery to control and contain these dangerous fires. Car fires from electric vehicles have proven to be extremely dangerous and last for a prolonged period, taking in many cases up to six hours to burn out. Alarming, even after the car fires have been extinguished, they can reignite in an instant. Sadly, some Florida homes which survived Hurricane Ian, have now been lost to fires caused by flooded EVs.

The current guidelines from EV manufacturers on the impacts of saltwater submersion on the operability of the vehicles does not adequately address the issue. As a result, most consumers are under the potentially life-threatening misimpression that their EVs will continue functioning properly after saltwater submersion – much like gas-powered vehicles. As increasing numbers of EVs come to market nationwide, this threat demands action by the U.S. Department of Transportation to develop guidance to properly caution consumers about this risk posed by EVs submerged in saltwater. Therefore, I request written responses to the following questions:

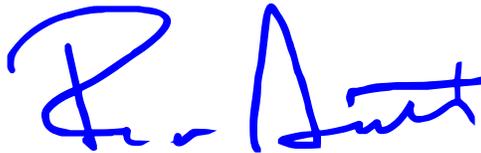
1. What guidance has the U.S. Department of Transportation required EV manufacturers to provide to consumers to communicate the dangers related to a vehicle impacted by saltwater flooding with their customers?

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2. What guidance has the U.S. Department of Transportation provided directly to consumers and EV operators about precautions to prevent their EV from combusting and catching fire after a saltwater flood?
3. What safety precautions or protocols has the U.S. Department of Transportation developed and made publicly available for owners of EVs when inclement weather is approaching?
4. What guidance has the U.S. Department of Transportation provided to EV manufacturers to address and prevent this issue before EVs leave the factory?
5. Has the U.S. Department of Transportation worked with the appropriate federal agencies to develop strategies and resources for local fire departments combatting EV fires?

I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rick Scott". The signature is stylized and written in a cursive-like font.

Rick Scott
United States Senator