

Google self-driving cars pass 300,000 mile mark

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(Phys.org) -- Google has just released an [update](#) on its blog boasting about how its fleet of self-driving cars which the company has designed and is operating on public roads, have collectively racked up over 300,000 miles of driving operations, with nary a single accident, at least while being driven by the computer. In the same announcement the company acknowledges that its autonomous vehicles still have a long way to go before being sold as a consumer product.

Google is not saying just how many of those miles have been driven on public roads versus those driven on its private track, but it's likely a lot due to its fleet having legal access in Nevada. Last year the state issued a license to one of the vehicles.

Google's aim in building self-driving cars is to replace human drivers with a computer, because humans have proven to be so fallible. Company head Eric Schmidt has been quoted recently as saying that his goal in creating self driving cars is to bring down the number of traffic fatalities due to human error, most particularly, by those who have been drinking alcohol based beverages, noting that some thirty five thousand people are killed in such accidents each year in the United States alone.

The company also says that it has given the go-ahead to some of its employees to begin riding in the vehicles solo, at least on their commute to work. Up till now, company policy has dictated that two people sit in the vehicle when the car is doing the driving. In this instance, the one person would sit in the driver's seat and take over should the need arise.

Looking towards the future, the company says it needs to work out how to get the cars to operate safely under less than optimal conditions, such as during snowy weather or when dealing with road construction. The sensors and computer system installed on the cars were designed to read and respond to normal road signs, which unfortunately aren't always what are posted when road crews begin working, making it difficult for the systems to figure out what to do. The company also noted that they have added a Lexus RX450h hybrid to its fleet.

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