

Nissan, NASA to work on autonomous car technology

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In this July 26, 2012 file photo, men walk in front of the logo of Nissan Motor Co. at its global headquarters in Yokohama near Tokyo. Japanese automaker Nissan and NASA are teaming up to advance the technology behind cars that drive themselves. Yokohama-based Nissan Motor Co. and NASA's Ames Research Center at Moffett Field, California, announced Thursday, Jan. 8, 2015 a five-year research-and-development partnership for autonomous vehicle systems so they can eventually be applied to commercially sold cars. (AP Photo/Koji Sasahara, File)

Japanese automaker Nissan and NASA are teaming up to advance the technology behind cars that drive autonomously.

Yokohama-based Nissan Motor Co. and NASA's Ames Research Center at Moffett Field, California, announced Thursday a five-year research-and-development partnership for autonomous vehicle systems so they can eventually be applied to commercially sold cars.

Nissan is excited about the potential of self-driving cars, which executives say could lead to improved safety, a pillar for future autos along with low emission [technology](#).

NASA researchers will be working with Nissan's research unit in Silicon Valley, they said in a joint statement.

The maker of the Leaf electric car and Infiniti luxury models aims to introduce autonomous driving technology to consumers between 2016 and 2020. Ames developed the Mars rover software and robots onboard the International Space Station.

"The partnership brings together the best and brightest of NASA and Nissan and validates our investments in Silicon Valley," said Nissan Chief Executive Carlos Ghosn.

The [safety technology](#) in the works includes cars that know through sensors they are about to collide and will brake automatically, even if the driver doesn't do a thing. There are also cars that can park themselves.

At its most sophisticated, the technology could replace human drivers altogether, though there are many hurdles to that being put into practice on roads.

Automakers besides Nissan are working on the technology, including Japanese rival Toyota Motor Corp. and U.S. manufacturers General Motors Co. and Ford Motor Co.

And companies outside the industry are getting involved, such as Google Inc.

The driverless car was the topic of a keynote address by Ford Chief Executive Mark Fields at the International CES gadget show in Las Vegas earlier this week.

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