

Uber fatal crash: Self-driving software reportedly set to ignore objects on road

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A pedestrian struck and killed by an Uber self-driving vehicle in Arizona in March may have been ignored as a "false positive" by the car's software.

The setting is meant to overlook certain objects in the path of an

autonomous [vehicle](#) that normally wouldn't be a problem. After an investigation by Uber, company executives believe that setting may have been tuned too far, according to a new report.

Tempe, Arizona police said Elaine Herzberg, 49, was struck outside a crosswalk March 18 by a vehicle that was going about 40 mph and did not brake. The backup driver at the wheel of the self-driving vehicle was seen looking down in a video released by police.

After what is believed to be the first pedestrian death caused by a self-driving vehicle, Uber was banned from testing its cars in Arizona. Its other self-driving hubs are in San Francisco, Pittsburgh and Toronto, although the company does not currently have permission to test such vehicles on public roads in California after letting its permit expire. The rest of its testing is on hold, a spokeswoman confirmed Tuesday.

"We're actively cooperating with the NTSB in their investigation," Uber told the Information, which Monday reported the news about the findings in Uber's investigation. "Out of respect for that process and the trust we've built with NTSB, we can't comment on the specifics of the incident."

The National Transportation Safety Board and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration are investigating the crash. Also Monday, Uber said it has asked former NTSB Chair Christopher Hart to advise the San Francisco company on safety.

According to the Information's report on Uber's investigation, the [company](#) may have tuned the self-driving software to not be too sensitive to objects around it because it is trying to achieve a smooth self-driving ride. Other autonomous-vehicle rides can reportedly be jerky as the cars react to perceived threats—that are sometimes non-existent—in their way.

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