General Information

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Description

Daimler reveals its 18-wheeler semi-truck that can drive itself. A human driver will still need to sit behind the wheel to navigate on to the highway and take over driving in the event of an emergency.

Keywords


Citation

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Transcript

Daimler Reveals Self-Driving Semi-Truck

LESTER HOLT, anchor:
It can make for anxious moments on the road. You're driving next to a big rig holding tightly on the wheel and feeling way too close for comfort. Well, soon that tractor-trailer may actually be driving itself--a kind of cruise control on steroids, if you will. We get the story tonight from NBC's Joe Fryer.

MAN: I'm going to go ahead and push the button and turn it on.

JOE FRYER, reporting:
The self-driving car movement is truly growing. Daimler has unveiled the Freightliner Inspiration, an 18-wheeler that can drive itself.

MAN: I'm completely hands-free.

FRYER: The semi-truck still needs a driver who steers it to the highway. From there, cameras and sensors help keep the big rig in a single lane, a safe distance from other cars. But if there's an emergency, the driver takes over.

MARY AUFDEMBERG (Freightliner Trucks Director of Product Marketing): At this point for us, we feel it's really important to continue to have drivers in the vehicle. We absolutely want a driver to be able to take control at any time.

FRYER: In 2013, crashes involving large trucks killed nearly 4,000 people and injured 95,000 others.

PHIL LEBEAU (CNBC Airline and Auto Industry Reporter): Self-driving trucks are important because it could alleviate one of the huge problems in this industry, and that's driver fatigue.

FRYER: The world's top automakers are developing in testing autonomous technology for personal vehicles. Google's even working on a car with no steering wheel. And earlier this year-- I'm in the passenger seat. And you can see no one is in the driver's seat. --BMW showed us a car that can valet park itself. But right now, automakers can only tests self-driving cars in four states: California, Nevada, Michigan and Florida, plus the District of Columbia.

LEBEAU: This is a case where the technology is moving faster than the lawmakers.

FRYER: While Daimler's semi is now licensed to drive on public roads in Nevada, the company wants to conduct more tests and ignite a conversation about driverless driving. Joe Fryer, NBC News, Los Angeles.