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Waymo to resume self-driving truck testing in Arizona

State remains popular place among tech companies for autonomous vehicle testing

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Waymo is resuming its self-driving truck testing in Arizona starting this week.

Waymo, the former Google self-driving car project, started its trucking program in 2017, and has tested its self-driving trucks in a geographically diverse set of locations, including the Bay Area, Atlanta and Arizona.

“We’re excited to resume our testing efforts in Arizona and continue learning,” Waymo said in a statement. “We’ll start driving on the freeways around metro Phoenix and expand to additional routes over time.”

Waymo also tweeted the news Wednesday.

Our fully self-driving trucks are returning to Arizona to continue testing on Phoenix area freeways. Let us know what you think if you see them on the road! pic.twitter.com/xkGJ3Cpo3C

— Waymo (@Waymo) [May 29, 2019](#)

The news comes as more companies roll out autonomous truck testing in the state, including TuSimple Inc., a San Diego-based self-driving semi-truck technology startup, which is partnering with the United States Postal Service on five pilot round-trip hauls from Phoenix to Dallas.

Waymo’s self-driving trucks will have two trained drivers in the rig.

“As our system’s self-driving capabilities grow, we will move toward fully driverless operation when safe to do so, but we have no further timeline to share,” the company said in a statement. “Our trucks use the same suite of custom-built sensors as our vehicles, but configured differently to better suit trucks. Since they are larger vehicles, our trucks have two of our long-range lidar, one on either side to allow our system to see further to the sides and back of the vehicle.”

The company will be testing with both empty trucks and with freight for testing purposes only, Waymo said.



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Waymo announced via Twitter it was resuming its self-driving truck testing on Phoenix-area freeways May 29, 2019.

Lina Karam, an Arizona State University professor in the School of Electrical, Computer and Energy Engineering, has worked with Waymo in the past and said that before Waymo tests its vehicles on the road the company first goes through extensive driving simulators.

“Waymo builds on Google data and expertise and has really powerful simulators they drive millions of miles with,” Karam said. “Their vehicles learn from the simulators because at the end of the day, cars are like robots.”

Testing on freeways is easier than on roads since vehicles typically don’t have to worry about pedestrians in the roadway, Karam said.

“I’m more worried about exhausted truck drivers on the road,” she said. “This technology can be safer.”

Arizona has a lot of self-driving testing on its roads because it’s a friendly state for automated mobility in general, has predictable weather and is a friendly, business state, Karam said.

However, with all the testing, Karam said companies should be working together to learn from each other if this technology is going to scale.

“They need to be setting standards and share the minimum requirements for their technology,” she said. “Each [company] is developing their own technology, but they need to share this knowledge among themselves.”

Karam led a university-wide initiative on automated mobility/self-driving cars across various schools and across four ASU campuses. She also initiated public-private-government partnerships which culminated in the establishment of the state-level Institute for Automated Mobility.

The Arizona Commerce Authority, Intel Corp. and Gov. Doug Ducey announced a partnership in October 2018 to create a consortium for the future of science, safety and policies regarding autonomous mobility in the state.

Late last year, Waymo launched its autonomous ride-hailing service in the Valley, allowing those in its early rider program to take self-driving Waymo vehicles to and from certain areas.

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