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Mercedes-Benz

Press Information

December 19, 2023

Mercedes-Benz receives approvals for turquoise-colored automated driving marker lights in California and Nevada

- Mercedes-Benz receives world's first approval for use of special exterior lighting for automated driving in California and Nevada
- In California, the permit is valid to test turquoise-colored marker lights for automated driving on freeways
- In Nevada, the permit allows production vehicles to be equipped with special marker lights beginning with Model Year 2026 EQS and S-Class DRIVE PILOT vehicles and continues until legislative changes
- First application in further development of DRIVE PILOT - the first and only certified system for conditionally automated driving (SAE-Level 3) in the U.S. (CA, NV)
- The production-ready version of DRIVE PILOT has already made its on-road debut in California and Nevada with a limited fleet of Level 3 equipped EQS Sedans
- Customer deliveries of DRIVE PILOT equipped Model Year 2024 EQS Sedan and S-Class models will be available in early 2024 through participating authorized Mercedes-Benz dealers in California and Nevada

Stuttgart / Sacramento / Carson City - Mercedes-Benz is the world's first automobile manufacturer to receive permits for special exterior marker lights for automated driving in the states of California and Nevada. The exemption permit for California is for testing vehicles and initially limited to two years. The Nevada permit applies to Mercedes-Benz Model Year 2026 production vehicles and will remain valid until a statutory modification is achieved with the state legislature.

Both permits allow Mercedes-Benz to gain important insights into the interaction of automated vehicles and other road users. The inclusion of marker lights is poised to substantially enhance public acceptance of automated driving and contribute to road safety, as the lights clearly visualize the automated driving system's status on the exterior. This also allows traffic law enforcement and police officers to identify the system's status and determine whether drivers are permitted to engage in secondary activities during the conditionally automated journey. Designed in accordance with SAE J3134 Recommended Practice, the turquoise-colored marker lights for automated driving in California are integrated into the front and rear lights as well as the two outside mirrors in Mercedes-Benz testing vehicles.

Mercedes-Benz AG | 70546 Stuttgart | P +49 711 17 0 | F +49 711 17 2 22 44 | dialog@mercedes-benz.com | www.mercedes-benz.com

Mercedes-Benz AG, Stuttgart, Germany | Domicile and Court of Registry: Stuttgart, Commercial Register No.: 762873

Chairman of the Supervisory Board: Bernd Pischetsrieder

Board of Management: Ola Källenius, Chairman; Jörg Burzer, Renata Juno Brüngger, Sabine Kohleisen, Markus Schäfer, Britta Seeger, Hubertus Troska, Harald Wilhelm

"With the development of automated driving marker lights, Mercedes-Benz is once again setting new industry standards. We are the first automaker in the world to receive such approvals in the U.S., specifically in California and Nevada. The more automated driving vehicles populate the road, the more important communication and interaction between the vehicle and the environment become."

Markus Schäfer, Member of the Board of Management of Mercedes-Benz Group AG, Chief Technology Officer,
Development & Purchasing

First use case: DRIVE PILOT

The automated driving marker lights will initially be integrated into testing vehicles in California equipped with DRIVE PILOT, which is the world's first SAE-Level 3 system for conditionally automated driving with internationally valid type approval. DRIVE PILOT received certification in 2021 in Germany and in 2023 in Nevada and California, U.S. where each state requires separate certification. While DRIVE PILOT has already been available for order since 2022 in Germany, the first production vehicles in the U.S. recently made their debut on the freeways of California and Nevada.

Choice of color of marker lights for automated driving

Two essential criteria contributed to the turquoise color choice – its visibility allows reliable and fast detection for other road users, and it offers differentiation from existing vehicle lighting and traffic signals such as traffic lights or emergency lighting. As a result, the possibility of confusion with already existing lighting colors may be reduced significantly. In addition, according to the findings of numerous test studies, turquoise is the optimal color for automated driving. Both physiological and psychological factors attest to higher values in almost all areas with turquoise rather than with other colors. Turquoise is also described in the industry-recommend practice SAE J3134 "ADS Marker Lamps" for use to display activation of an automated driving system. The development and approval of the new lighting concept involved collaborative efforts of an interdisciplinary team, consisting of engineers, compliance managers, data protection experts and ethics experts.

Standardization and harmonization for more safety

Mercedes-Benz is committed to standardizing the color turquoise with the intention to visualize the automated driving state, fostering global understanding and acceptance for this technology. So far, there is no general framework in the U.S., China or the UN-ECE (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe) for using turquoise lights in production vehicles. California and Nevada have taken the first important step with the now-granted exemptions. A future globally harmonized regulation for turquoise marker lights for automated driving will form the basis for heightened safety for all road users and propelling further technical innovations.

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About Mercedes Benz

Mercedes-Benz USA (MBUSA), headquartered in Atlanta, is responsible for the distribution, marketing and customer service for all Mercedes-Benz products in the United States. MBUSA offers drivers the most diverse lineup in the luxury segment with 18 model lines ranging from the sporty GLA SUV to the flagship S-Class and the dynamic all-electric vehicles from Mercedes-Benz. MBUSA is also responsible for Mercedes-Benz Vans in the U.S. More information on MBUSA and its products can be found at www.mbusa.com and www.mbvans.com.

Accredited journalists can visit our media site at media.mbusa.com.

Contacts:

Michael Minielly
Cathleen Decker

michael.minielly@mbusa.com
cathleen.decker@mbusa.com