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## Thatcham Research comments on Uber's self-driving operator charged over fatal crash and considerations for the UK

Thatcham Research's Director of Insurance Research, Matthew Avery, has shared his thoughts after the back-up driver in a self-driving Uber vehicle appeared in court yesterday (15 September) facing [negligent homicide charges following a fatal accident in the USA](#).

The victim, 49-year-old Elaine Herzberg, was hit by the self-driving Volvo as she cycled across a road in Tempe, Arizona, in 2018. Rafaela Vasquez was in the driver's seat of the Volvo and had the role of safety driver to take control

of the vehicle in an emergency. But according to investigators, Ms. Vasquez had been streaming a television show at the time of the collision. The trial has been scheduled for February 2021.

Avery believes the Arizona case highlights key liability and safety considerations at a time when the UK Government is currently running a consultation on the adoption of UN Regulations around Automated Lane Keeping Systems (ALKS), that would allow hands-free driving on UK roads as early as January 2021.

“The Uber case throws the spotlight on the UK Government’s wish to implement automated driving within the next 12 months and highlights significant liability and safety questions that need to be ironed out quickly,” Avery says.

“In automated mode, will the ALKS be able to steer the car to avoid a person or debris in the road? And if the driver is unresponsive and can’t take back control, will it be able to find a ‘safe harbour’ off the carriageway, or will it be a danger to itself and other road users if it comes to a stationary halt in the road?”

“During the last four years, Thatcham Research and the ABI have worked closely with UK Government and global legislators to define [12 Principles that ensure safe automated driving](#). These Principles highlight the fact that any systems that require driver intervention cannot be classified as automated.

The judgements in the Uber case, and the current UK Government consultation on ALKS, highlight the significant challenges legislators, law makers, insurers and vehicle manufacturers face to ensure the safe adoption of automated driving.”

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Thatcham Research is the independent voice of automotive safety, security & repair, advising motorists, insurers and vehicle manufacturers to help reduce accident frequency, severity and costs and to realise the vision of ‘Safer cars, fewer crashes’, while driving standards in vehicle security.

As well as its world leading crash and track research, Thatcham Research develops repair methods amongst a number of other products and services within the collision repair industry for insurers, motor manufacturers, equipment manufacturers and suppliers.

In addition, Thatcham Research has administered the Association of British Insurer's (ABI) Group Rating system for the past 50 years. Group Rating is an advisory system intended to provide insurers with the relative risk of private cars and light commercial vehicles.

A founder member of the international Research Council for Automobile Repairs (RCAR), Thatcham Research has also been a member of the European New Car Assessment Programme (Euro NCAP) since 2004.

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