Battery Safety Science Webinar Series Advancing safer energy storage through science

April 19, 2021

**Electric Vehicle Fire Data and Concerns** for First and Second Responders

Host Presenter **Tapesh Joshi, Ph.D.** Robert "Bob" Swaim Principal, HowItBroke.com





© 2021 Underwriters Laboratories Inc. All rights reserved. UL and the UL logo are trademarks of UL LLC.

# l r 63 eering

0

## Practical Electric Vehicle Firefighting An ISO 17840 based class

#### Robert L. Swaim

Founder: www.HowItBroke.com

NTSB Engineering National Resource - Retired

Safety Risks to Emergency Responders from Lithium-Ion Battery Fires in Electric Vehicles

Safety Risks to Emergency Responders from Lithium-Ion Battery Fires in Electric Vehicles. NTSB SR-20-02, 11/13/2020



JA8291

Orange Co. File Author

unicef @

Lake Forest CA 8/25/2017

Japan Airlines 787, 1/7/2013

Source: NTSB Public Docket

Source: NTSB Public Docket





#### Resources

#### NFPA

#### www.EVSafetyTraining.org

Training developed with manufacturers, agencies, and organizations

Trained >1900 trainers in majority of States

>30,000 trained

Extensive resources

Online info

Online classes

Field emergency guide

SAE J2990 Hybrid and EV First and Second Responder Recommended Practices

UL FSRI - Firefighter Safety Research Institute Firefighter research and training is online and free

www.ulfirefightersafety.org

## Two firefighter demographics

1,115,000 total, 67% are volunteers, 92% male

Location:

About half in rural community <2,500 population, majority are volunteers About 2/3 of US population served by professional or mixed departments Education:

High school with non-degree EMT award and specialized training

More of professionals have bachelor degrees in:

Business (22%), Protective Services (18%) source: datausa.io

Age and experience:

27% between 30-39 years old,

41% with >10 years experience Volunteer:

Most common non-FF employment: #1 Repairing, #2 Equipment Maintenance



Source: NFPA Feb 2020 based in 2018 data

R.Swaim

## The "only" two firefighter EV concerns and issues

#### Fear of the unknown – Will it bite me?

#### 1. Fire related concerns

What is a battery? What does one even look like?
What is an EV and how are they different than a "normal" car?
Most volunteer FF are employed in repair fields
What burns and how?
Will it explode?
Stories and urban legends
How bad is the smoke?

#### 2. Electric related concerns

Is the hose stream electrified? Is the vehicle body electified? Is fire while hooked up to a charger a hazard? What is trapped energy and why is it a hazard?

<u>Firefighters need more knowledge to</u> <u>even know what concerns they should</u> <u>have around an EV</u>

#### What needs to be done?

#### 3. Tactical concerns

How to approach an EV? How to identify an EV? Move or immobilize? How to disable the HV hazards? Threats to extricating victims? How close can FF get? Dismay at lack of design standards threatening responders and victims Working around trapped energy? How to extinguish? Water? Foam? Which foam? ABC? Why won't it go out? Targeting separate fuels in a fire Need for additional FF for oversight

#### 4. Situational concerns

How does EV firefighting fit into hundreds of years of training?

- CTIF International Association of Fire and Rescue Services
- ISO International Standards Organization (Ref. 17840)
- SAE Society of Automotive Engineers (Ref. J2990)
- NFPA National Fire Protection Association

What EVs tend to have fires and where? What's typical versus how bad can an EV fire be? Complacency EVs other than cars?

#### Will it bite me? What firefighters want to know

## 1. Fire related concerns

## Three cell shapes/formats

Hazard typically is based in chemistry and not format

**Prismatic cells** frequently used for large & industrial batteries.

**Pouch cells** are least expensive to manufacture. Used in cars, cell phones, and tablets.

The GM "Ultium" is shown below.

Single Pouch

**Cylindrical cells** shown as an assembly with a battery management circuit board for charging.

30

Q U

-

1 Brok

Typical vape, power tool, or mower battery.

1. Fire concern What does an EV battery even look like? Cells versus assemblies Pouch Cells

PHOTOS REMOVED

Module

## What is in a lithium-lon battery

Cells are designed to vent and may burn but not be explosive



0

1

30

19

Cathode (+) Aluminum foil with oxide coating Separator Porous polypropylene membrane (typ.) Anode (-)

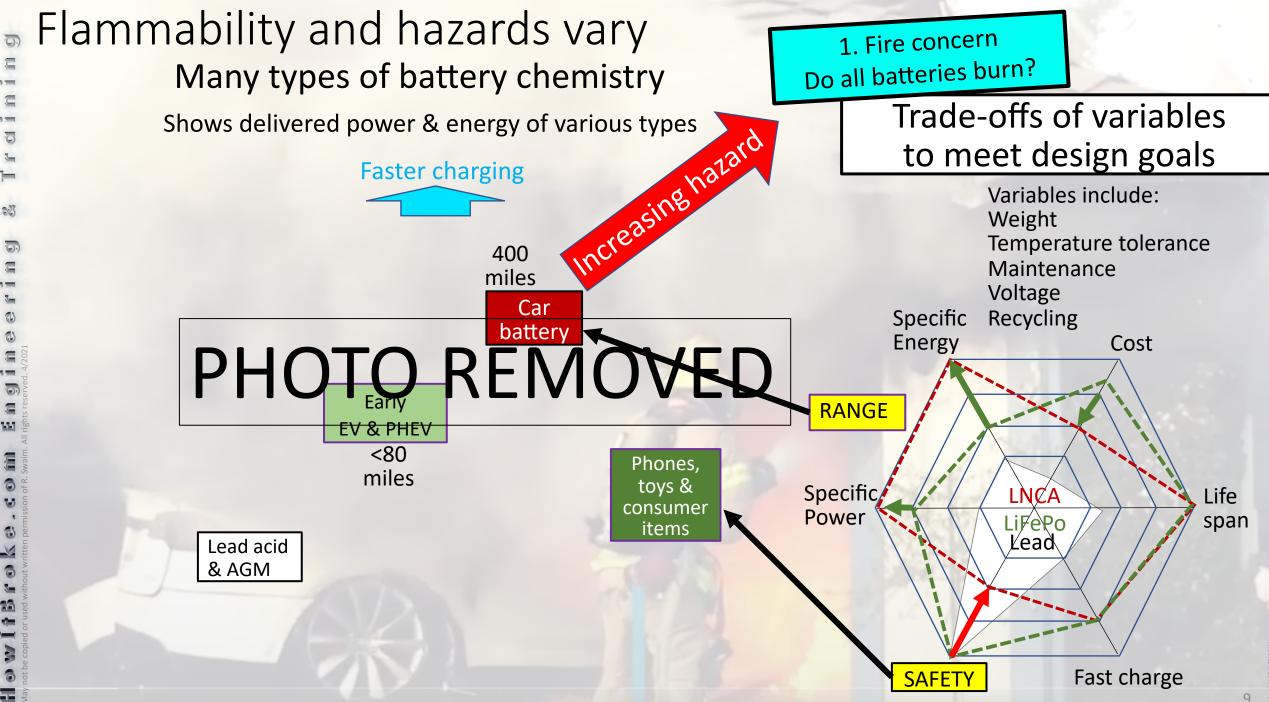
Copper foil with porous carbon coating

Electrolyte = light <u>oil</u> that feels like diesel fuel Carries dissolved lithium salt ions (NO FLAMMABLE METAL IN RECHARGEABLE CELLS)

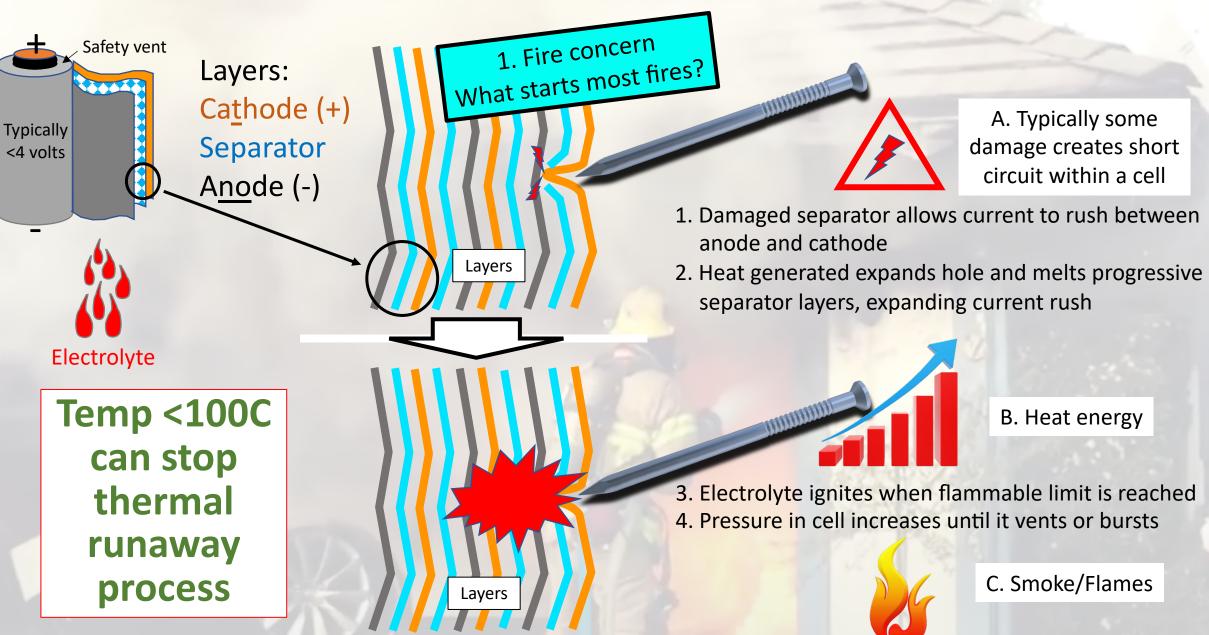


of the complete fire triangle

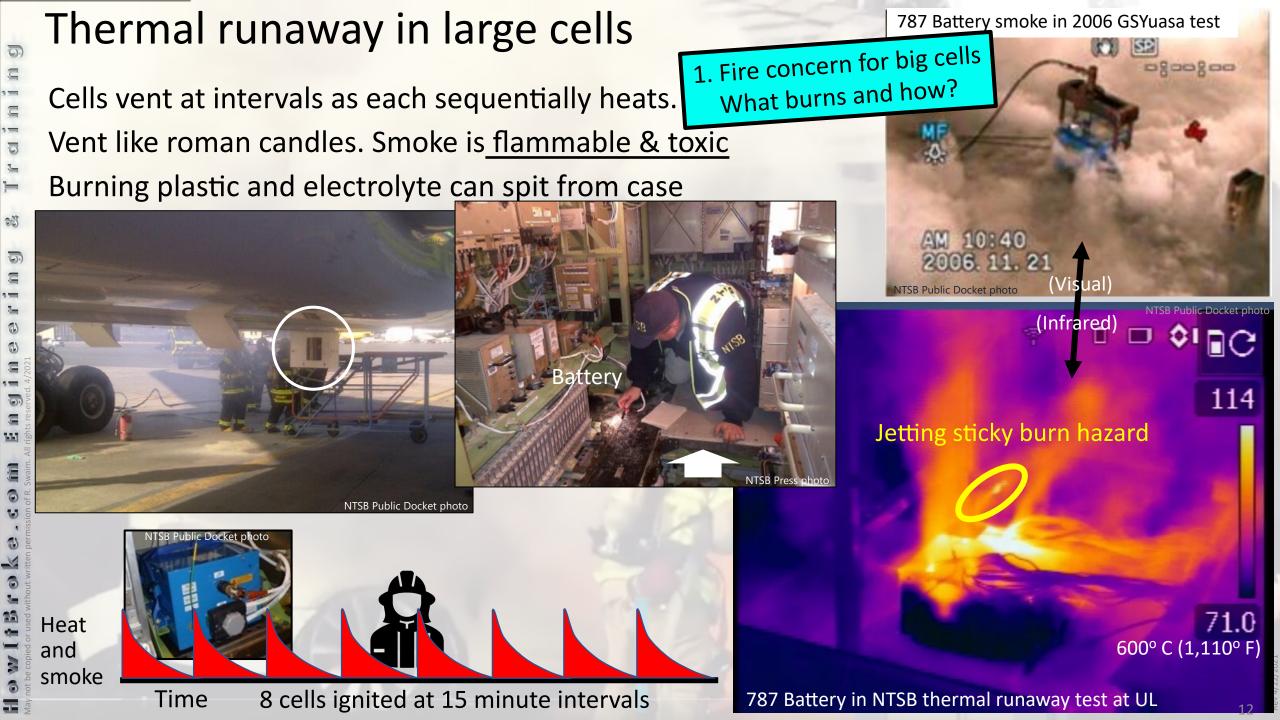
Flammable electrolyte and plastic separator as fuel



#### Thermal runaway process







## Initial battery smoke content Think plastic f

Think plastic fire with nasty additives

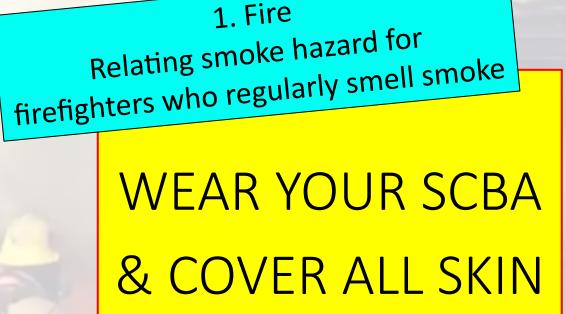
Depends on constituent materials Spectrum analysis of burning batteries found:

Carbon Monoxide Carbon dioxide Methane Ethylene Ethylene Acetylene H<sub>2</sub>O Dimethyl carbonate Ethylmethyl carbonate Eye & lung irritating acids

ightarrow Can not breath

- Can ignite

Hazardous Materials



Soot may contain cobalt oxide, nickel oxide, manganese oxide, and other heavy metal skin irritants

### **Electric Vehicles**

1. Fire concern How EVs are different

Electric vehicles move by power of a traction battery Normally have TWO batteries,

- Cabin &systems, 1.
  - 12V
  - High Voltage (HV) Traction, 355 to 560+ volts

Battery Management System (BMS) integrated or separate

EV WITH BATTER(IES) BUILT INTO BODY (TYPICALLY OLDER) "INTEGRATED" STYLE

FF Risks: 12V Battery activating airbags & restraints **Burning plastics** HV Traction battery fire Electrocution by high voltage Arc Flash

#### BATTERY/MOTOR ASSY BENEATH BODY "ROLLER SKATE" STYLE

VW ID.3

Orange denotes high voltage >30 VAC or 60 VDC



0 30

#### Will it bite me? What firefighters want to know

## 2. Electric related concerns

## **Electrical concerns for firefighters**

12V battery controls safety devices: Airbags, seat belt pretensioners, door locks

EV will have a HV traction battery Typically 300+ Volts

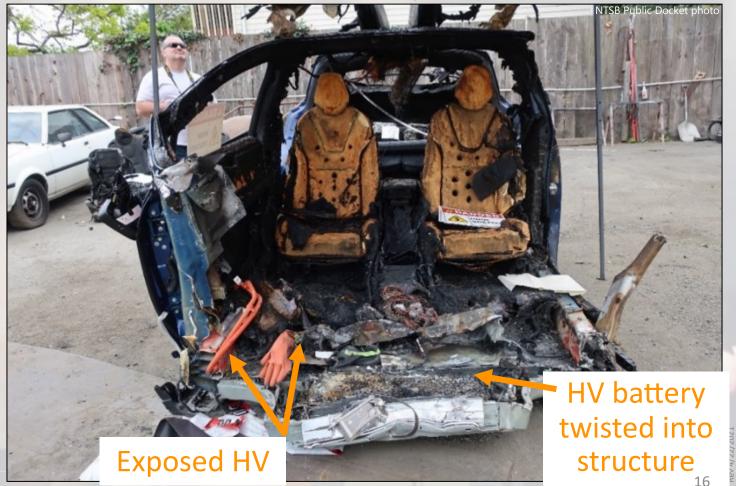
HV battery "Stranded energy" Electrocution Concerns at hose nozzle At or in the vehicle

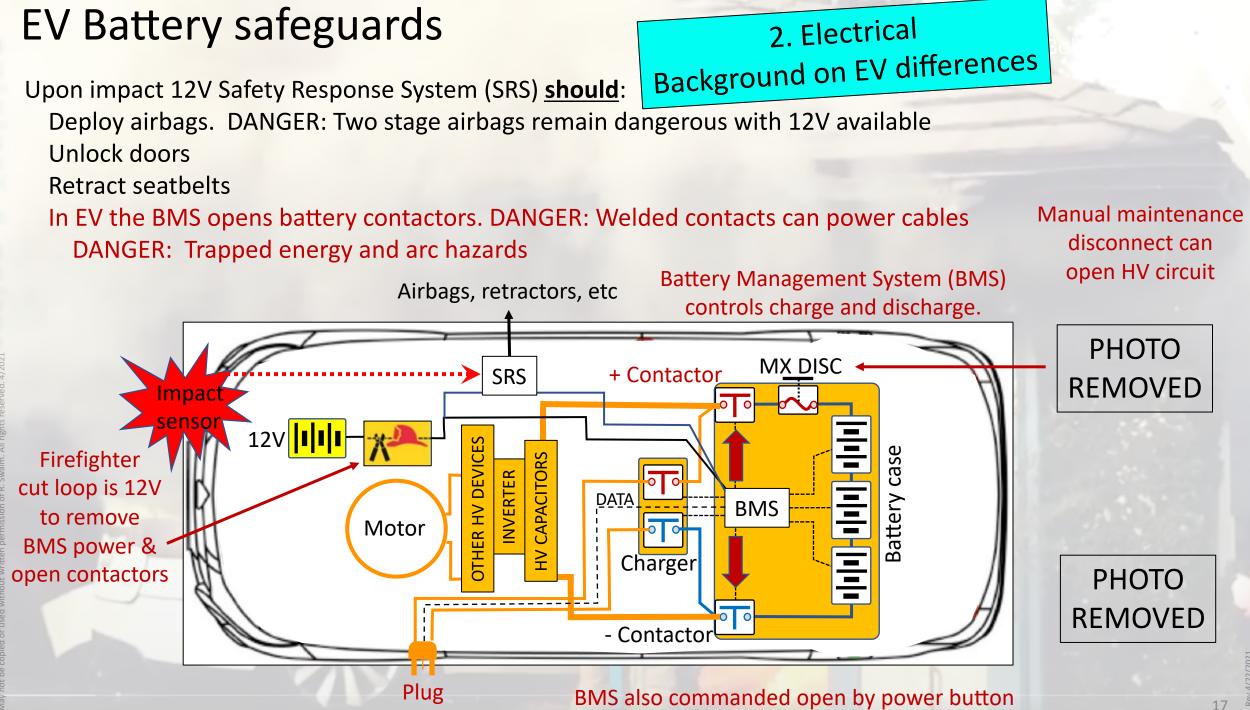
Arc flash

#### **Re-ignitions**

2. Electrical concern Introduction to added EV hazards

Burned three times including 6 days after accident



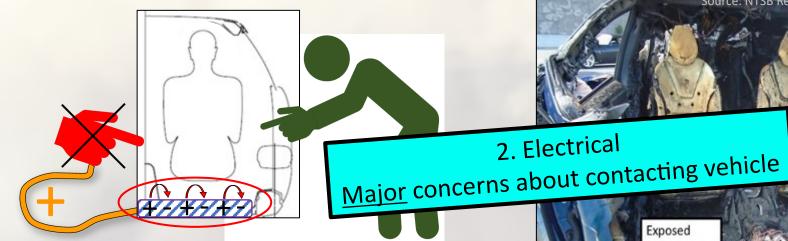


## Stranded energy - Electrocution at or in vehicle is possible

2. Electrical

Exposed battery cells

1. The car structure and occupants should not be electrified to touch



ЪЫ

2. Risk is from getting between exposed HV parts to become part of the circuit. Examples:

A. An exposed hand touching orange cables with the other hand on the car body.

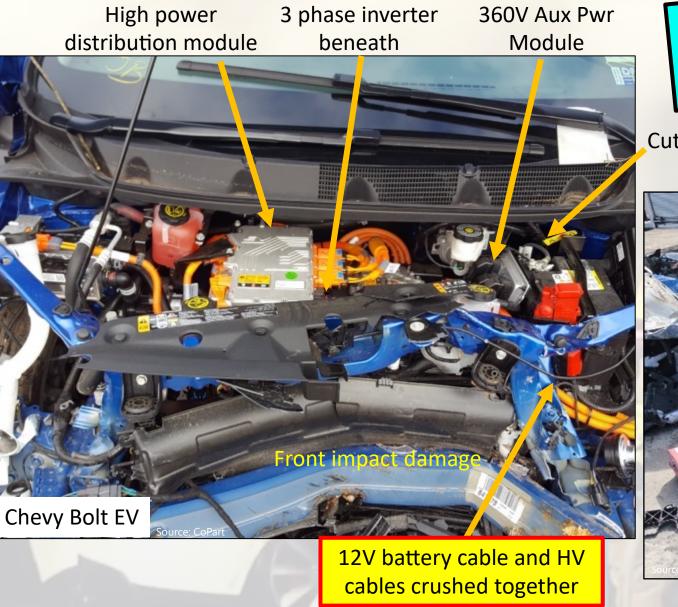
B. Leaning on exposed internal HV battery parts. Internal HV parts may **<u>not</u>** be orange! This large piece of grey metal is an internal HV bus bar. C. Standing water charged by HV

Bus bar wrapped in heavy rubber and labeled





## Beware of high voltage dangers



2. Electrical Damage may add hazards to crash vehicles Responder actions may create hazards

#### Cut loop over orange cables

Debris found loaded on deformed battery



Plastic insulation may be broken or burned away

## Stranded energy is a shorting and arc flash danger!

Car struck concrete wall at 86 mph. Flooding open area of battery extinguished fire with 200-300 gallons of water.



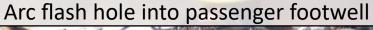
Cells found in passenger footwell



Numbers denote modules

111

h



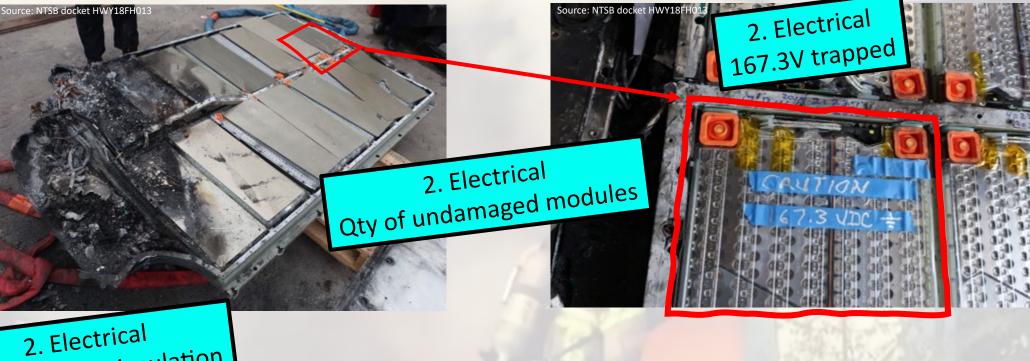


#### Stranded energy is a short circuit and arc flash danger!

Also an example why you should never attempt to pierce a battery

Note how few modules were consumed. Missing insulation created potential HV shorts

167.3 Volts in this module <u>days</u> after the accident!!!



Missing plastic insulation Plastic insulation burns away, allowing cells to short. Do not step on or press on damaged batteries.

## **EV Charging stations**

#### Vehicle:

Is disconnection during charge a hazard? How to physically disconnect?

Chargers and cables: When are the HV cables charged? Can cable be cut? How to turn off power to the station? What HV is at a damaged charger?

> 2. Electrical concerns Lack of standards in status colors, Lack of physical protection, Lack of electrical protection, Lack of emergency shutoff



PHOTO REMOVED

## Common US chargers:

No protective vehicle barrier for many HV source enters base, below contactors No visible emergency "panic buttons"







#### Operational

## 3. Tactical concerns

#### Approach hazards

Same as in ICE vehicles

- Approach from 45 degrees
- Wheel chocks

25

111

- Set parking brake
- Vehicle into park
- Turn off ignition
- **Disconnect 12V battery**

#### EV sides add hazard:

Battery venting -Note that fire is beneath doors

EV adds front and rear hazards: Venting fire at front in impact damaged areas Some vehicles may vent at rear Fuel tanks in hybrids and hydrogen vehicles Rolling vehicle hazard (throttle is electric)

#### EV charging station power is high voltage

Intro to how an EV adds differences at scene 3. Tactical

#### Mitsubishi Outlander EV

Jordan Jiang @J\_\_Squared · May 16, 2019

A man in his 40s jumped from his boat after his boat & SUV rolled back into the water at Rocky Point Park last night. When the electric Mitsubishi SUV was pulled from the water, it caught fire. @PortMoodyFR fought the fire with caution. Details on @CTVMorningLive & @CTVVancouver



#### Hydrolysis can create flammable gas Fire took hours to extinguish

#### Identifying vehicles with traction batteries can be hard

0,

I D

Ţ

3 =

0

-

30

g 5=

> 5 1

1 g 1= 0

111

1 B F O L

T



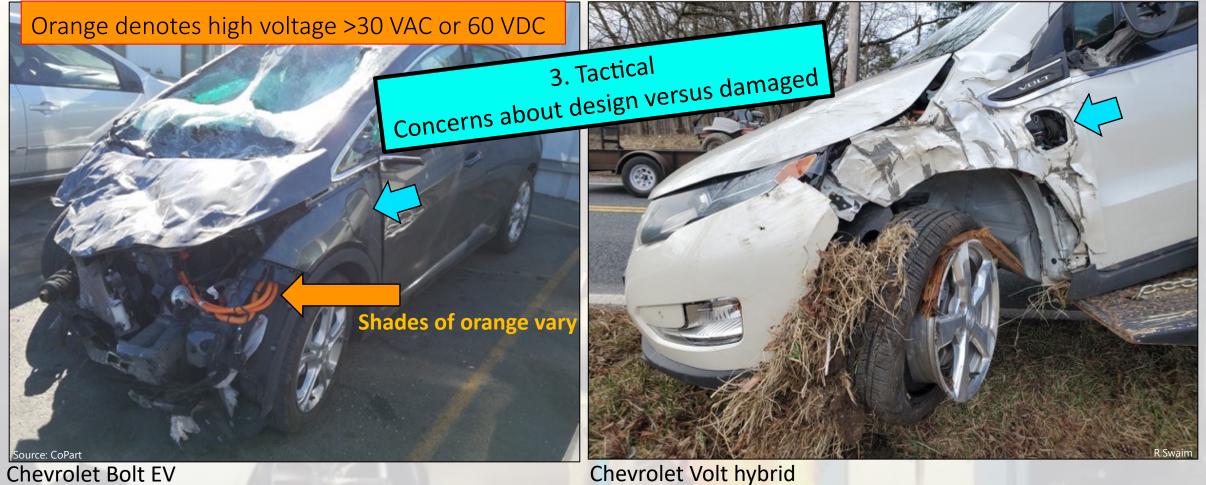
Source: CoPart

## Clues beyond the badging:

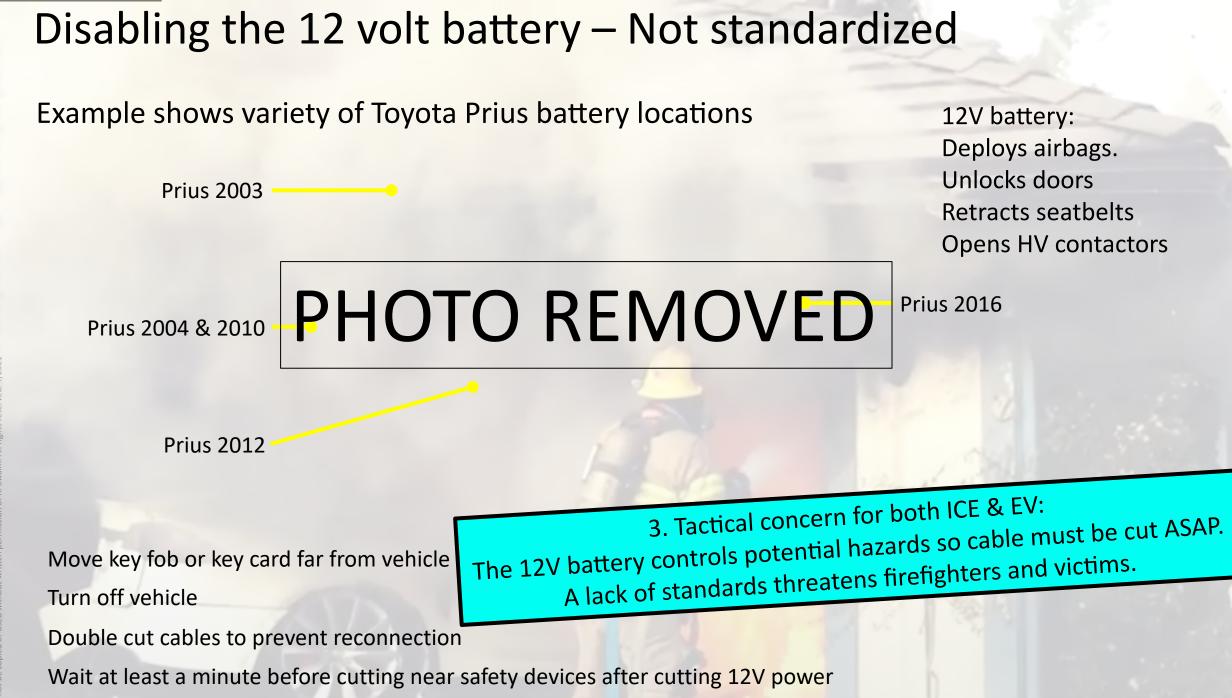
#### **Orange color**

Name badge clue is missing

<u>Charge port</u> in front of driver door (Ford, Chevy), nose (Hyundai, Kia, Nissan), or left tail light (Tesla) Port displaced into door hinge



Seeing leaked "coolant" can indicate damage to the HV battery and extra care should be taken



## Orange means high voltage - Cut loop info

- 1. Cut loops are control circuits that **<u>do not</u>** contain high voltage
  - Airbag deployment should have already restricted HV to within the HV battery
- 2. The helmet and cutter symbol is an ISO standard so look for it

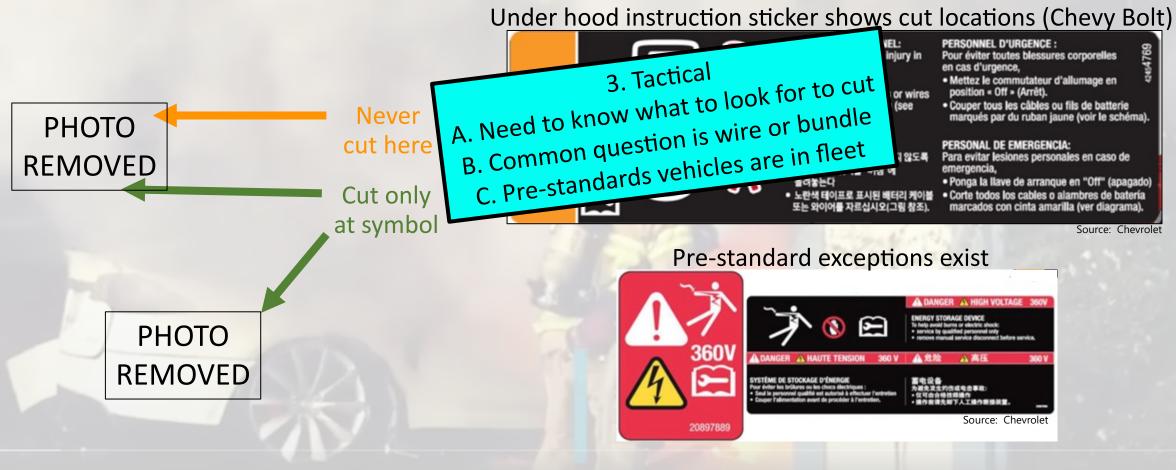
#### 3. The shades of orange and tag details vary

r 0

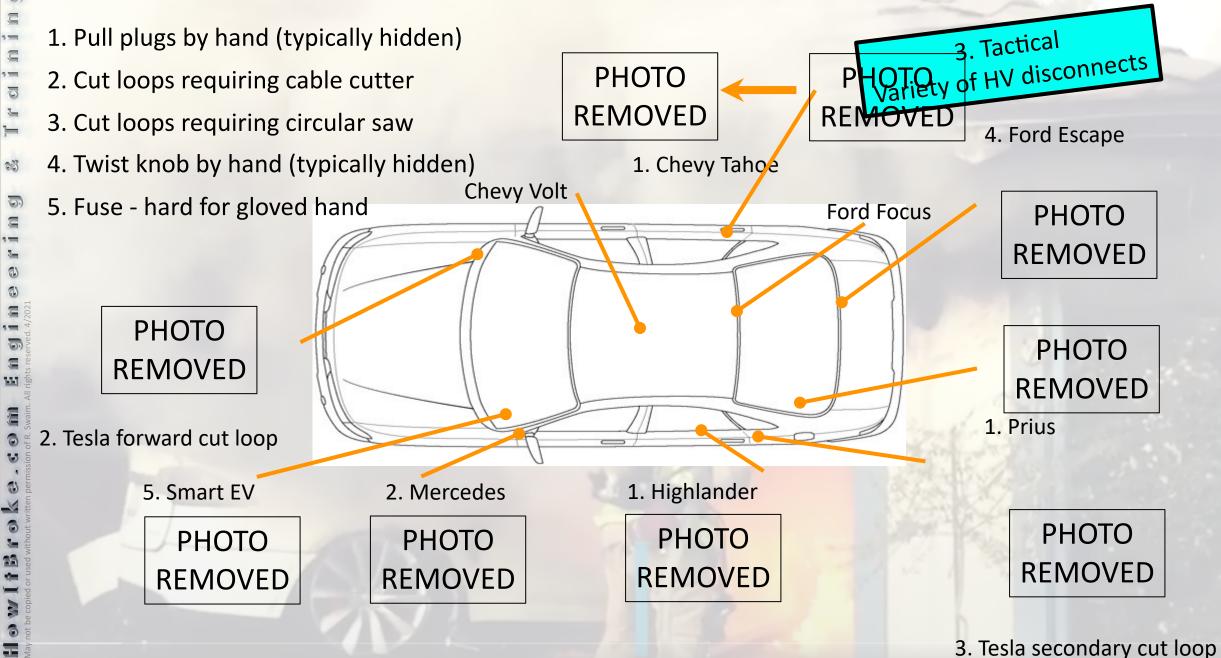
63

-6

4. Fire may burn tag, leaving ERG as means to find the cut loops



### HV Disconnects are not standardized and may need tools



#### "Sheets" may lack key details – Try to access full ERG

Į,

3 ==

g

1 =

0

5 

03

G

-

-E. 1 g

-

J 111

> Į. 6 U

> 1

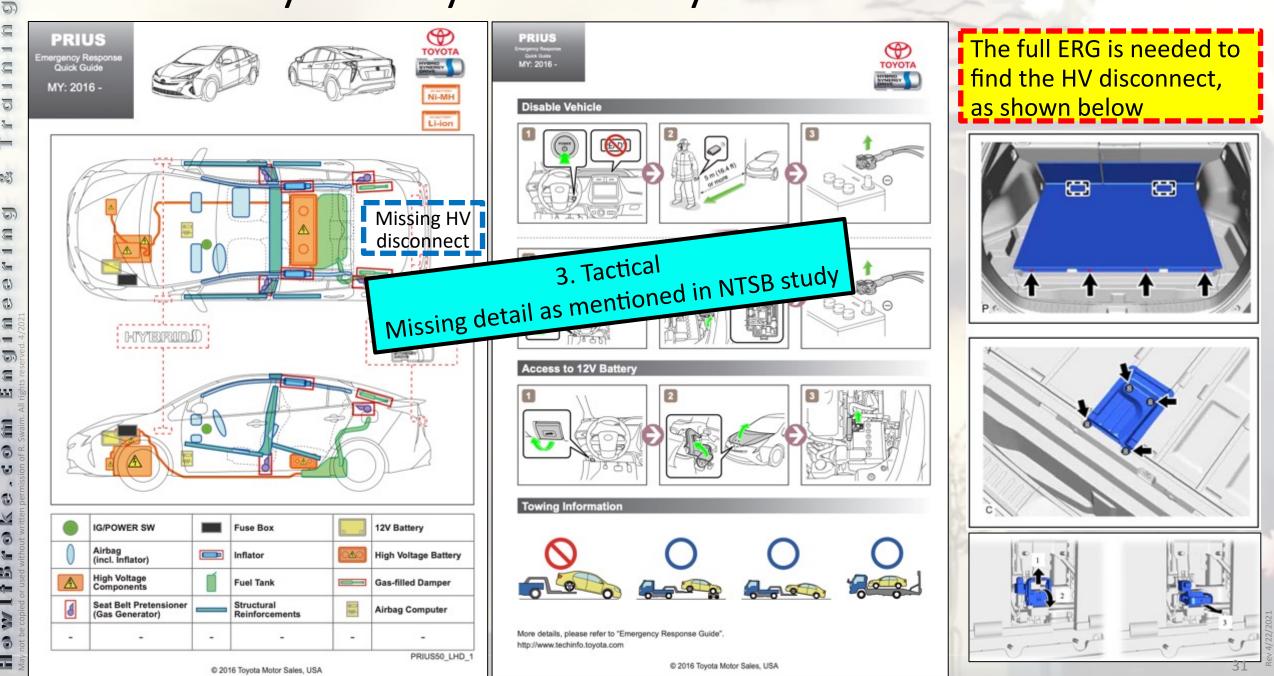
M

6

-

16

-



## HV - Some disconnects may be impractical to access

Chevy Volt is an example of how impractical some access may with fire present

To reach disconnect: Get past victim(s) Open arm rest Remove storage tray Pull back white cover Press a tab Pull out the pull plug

0)

g



# Emergency Response Guides (ERG) show where the disconnects are

Google: NFPA EV ERG

3. Tactical Potentially inaccessible disconnects with fire or damage mentioned in NTSB study

> OR Cut loop hidden in side wall of trunk



## Emergency Response Guides (ERG) have critical answers

ERGs assume user is already fully trained and certified for rescue.

ERGs <u>ONLY</u> provide <u>basic</u> guidance to disable, plus locations of HV components to avoid, such as airbags, inflation cylinders, seat belt pre-tensioners, and areas resistant to cutting.

Tesla:

Problem is in variations, even between diff Downloadable response guides from

#### Most ERGs are linked at the NFPA Website

IJ

ľ ol

1

30

0

I II

1

g

0

G

111

(in)

-6



Emergency Response 0.1
 Quick Response 0.1
 Quick Response 0.1
 Emergency FF not yet aware of resources 018
 Emergency Bande: Tesla Model S EV 2012 - 2015

- Quick Response Guide: Tesla Model S EV 2012 2015
- Emergency Response Guide: Tesla Model S EV 2016 2018
- Quick Response Guide: Tesla Model S EV 2016 2018
- Emergency Response Guide: Tesla Model S EV Dual Motor 2012 2015
- Emergency Response Guide: Tesla Model X EV 2016 2018
- Quick Response Guide: Tesla Model X EV 2016 2018
- Quick Response Guide: Tesla Roadster EV 2008 2009
- Quick Response Guide: Tesla Roadster EV 2010 2013

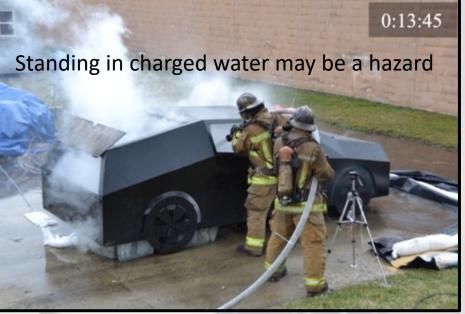
https://www.nfpa.org/Training-and-Events/By-topic/Alternative-Fuel-Vehicle-Safety-Training/Emergency-Response-Guides

## Minimal electric hazard at hose nozzle

Water shorting of cells within the battery case creates a closed circuit Two examples of test results:

- <0.4V and <2 mA reached nozzle in testing by Maryland Research Fire Institute (MRFI) on electric vehicle batteries up to 400 VDC. (Photos below)
   Source: https://www.nfpa.org/-/media/Files/News-and-Research/Fire-statistics-and-reports/Electrical/EVBatteriesPart2.ashx
- 2. Water found safe to use at 10 feet on a 1,000 volt (1 kV) source with jet or spray.

Conclusion of testing by Amped I, LLC, for ConEdison on Feb 3, 2018 pertaining to stationary Essential Supply System (ESS)



Batteries can re-ignite after water drains away This battery re-ignited 22 hours later

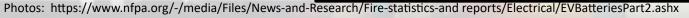
MRFI Measurement of electrical energy reaching nozzle found safe levels of energy

3. Tactical

Major concerns about

electrocution hazards





#### Inability to draw down stranded energy

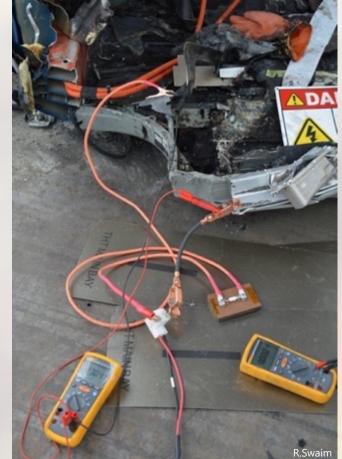


33

End

Factory provided resistor bank could not reach isolated modules

3. Tactical Inability to remove trapped energy hazard

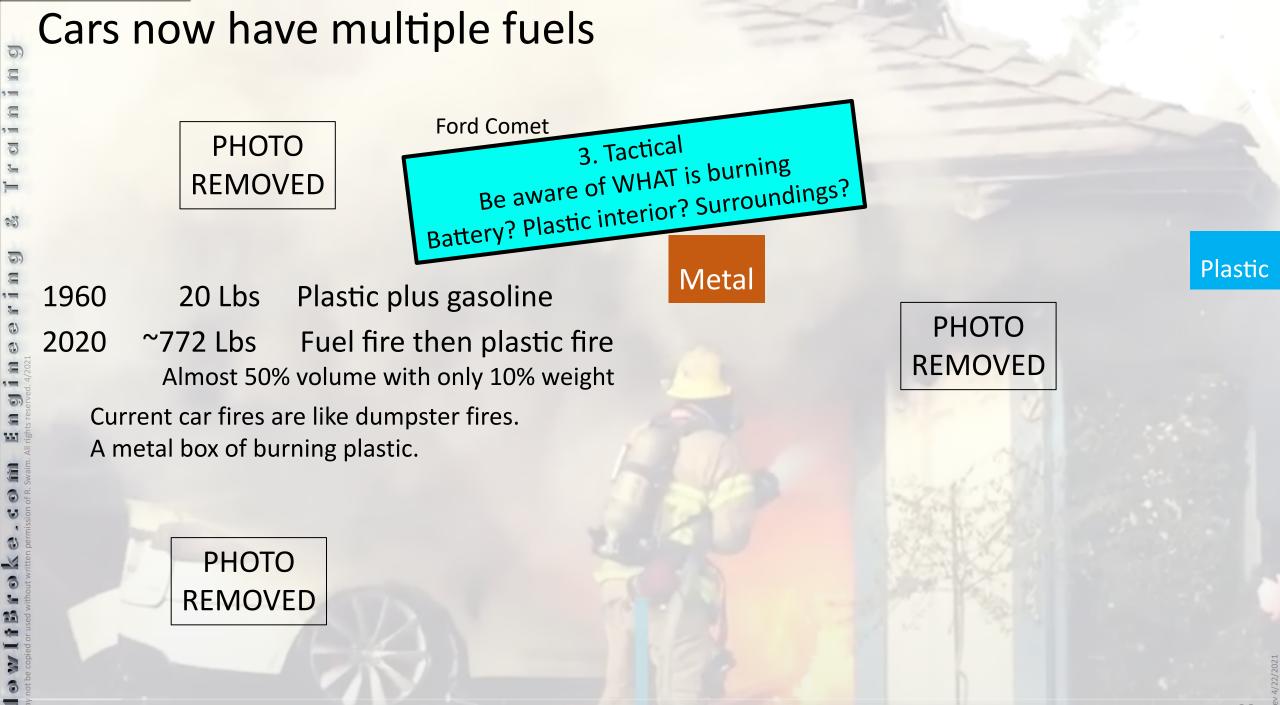


Ad hoc resistor ineffective Would take weeks



Saltwater immersion can be effective 1. For the cells/modules the water can reach 2. Requires a week of time

3. Can release hydrogn



### Lifting and shoring

n i n g

<u>ci</u> l

T r

3

în g

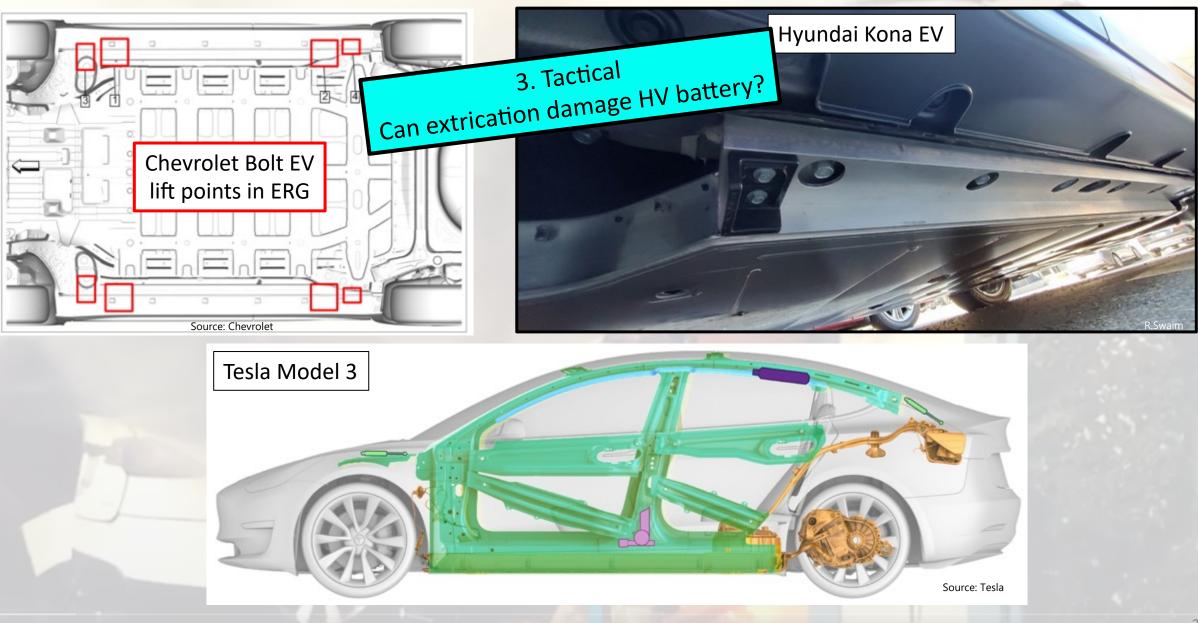
=

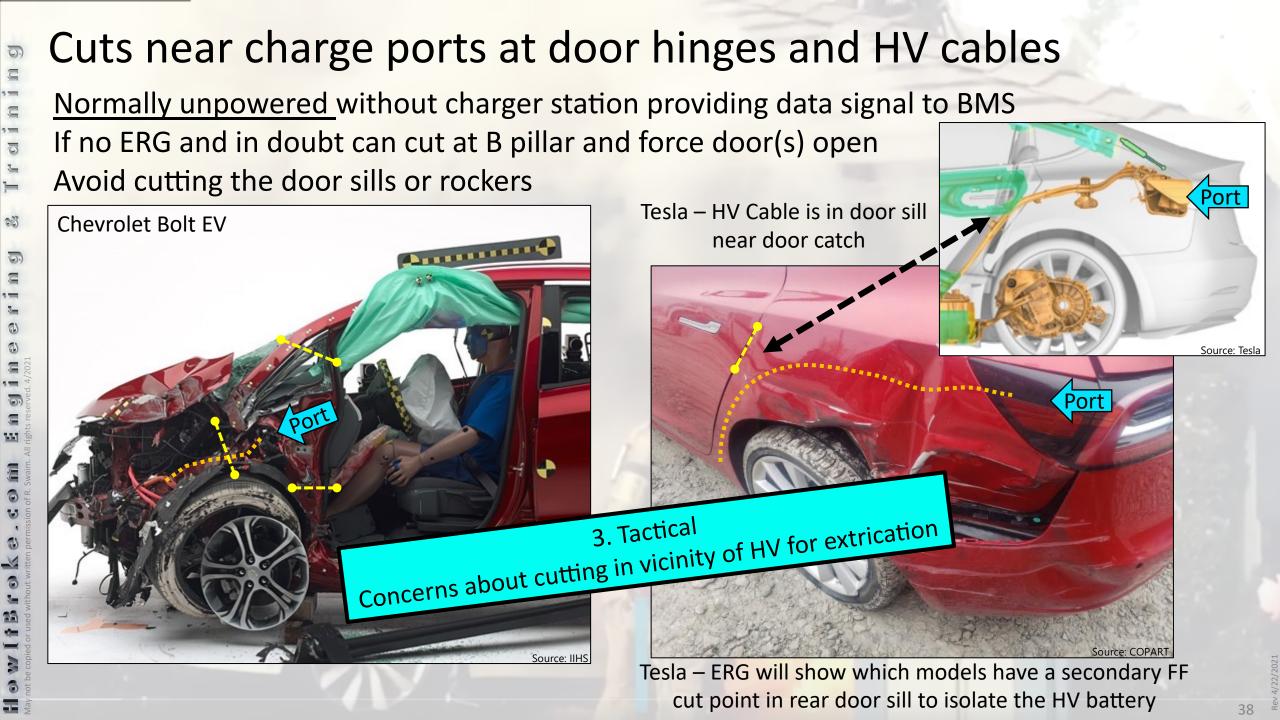
ngineer

11

U

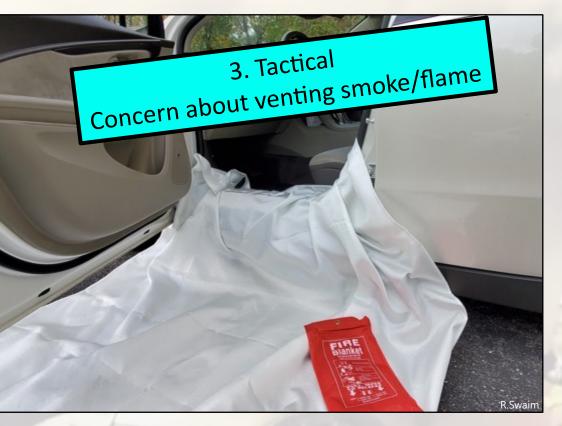
Howlissrok





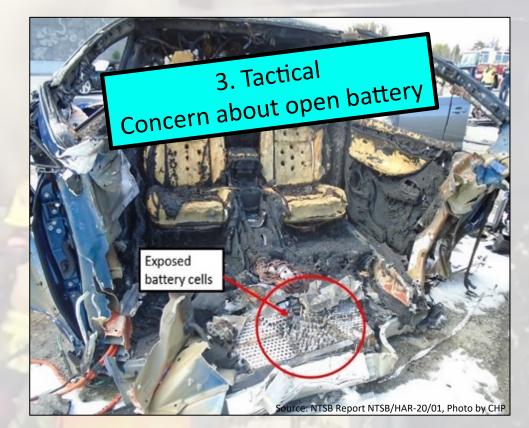
### Extrication

Much like any other vehicle once electric aspects are accounted for. Use the ERG to know where HV hazards are Be aware of smoke, sound, and leaking fluids!



Fire blanket may be placed over door sill in case battery vents

Fiberglass blanket can add additional (poor) electric insulation layer



Individual cells may launch

Hazard is the burning electrolyte

### Water in vehicle cabin does not reach cells

BMW i3

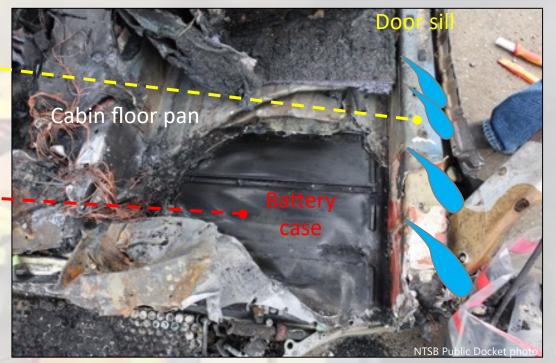
The body is a tub and separate from the sealed battery beneath

Cool the bottom

If the battery is a fuel

3. Tactical How to extinguish a battery fire

This will only address the body plastics fire (Class B) Because water will not reach cells



Layers between cabin floor and top of sealed battery case



Water spills out

## Try to get water into the battery case if possible

Some new EVs have a designed opening for firefighting. Consult ERG

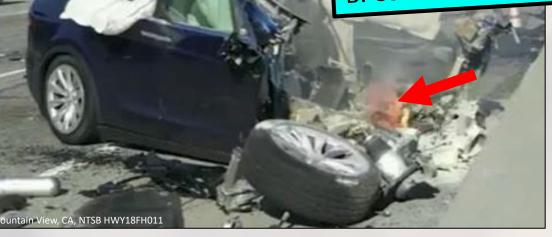
Concentrate water at exposed cells to flood battery case

0

0

30

3. Tactical A. Concern about effective water usage B. Concern about how to use foaming agents



Venting indicates where case was open

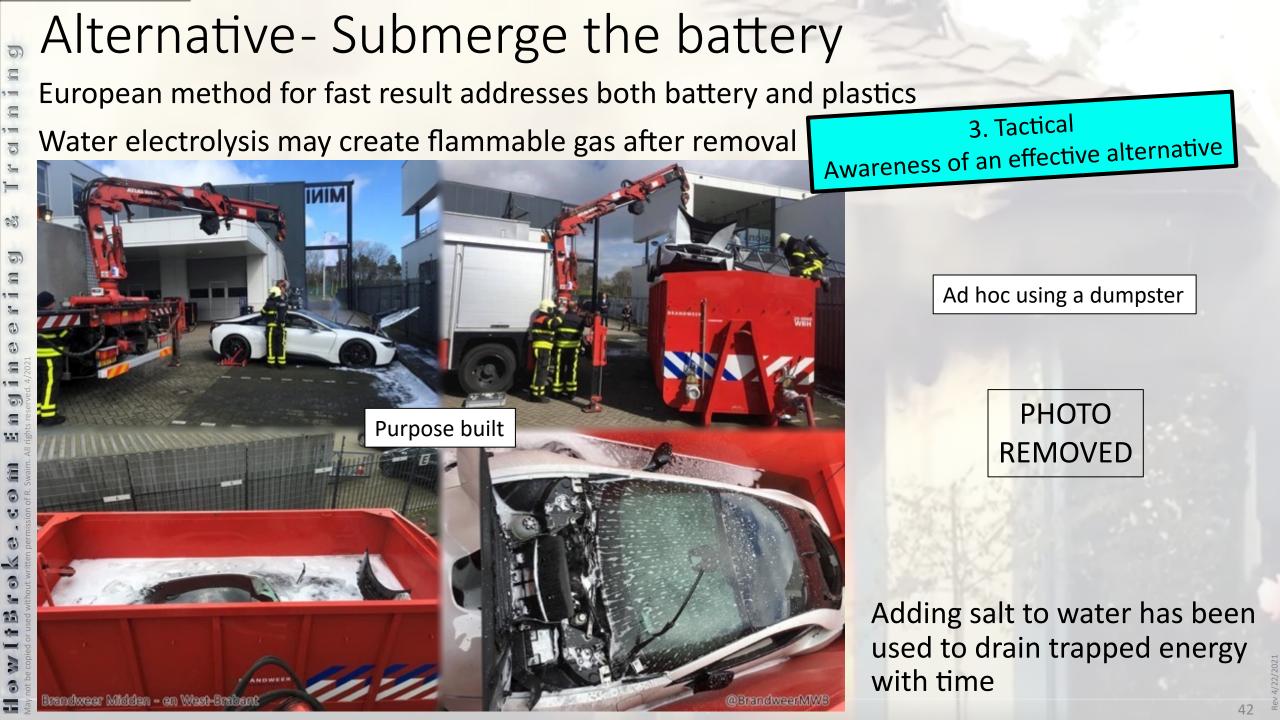
Use only enough to help wet and penetrate

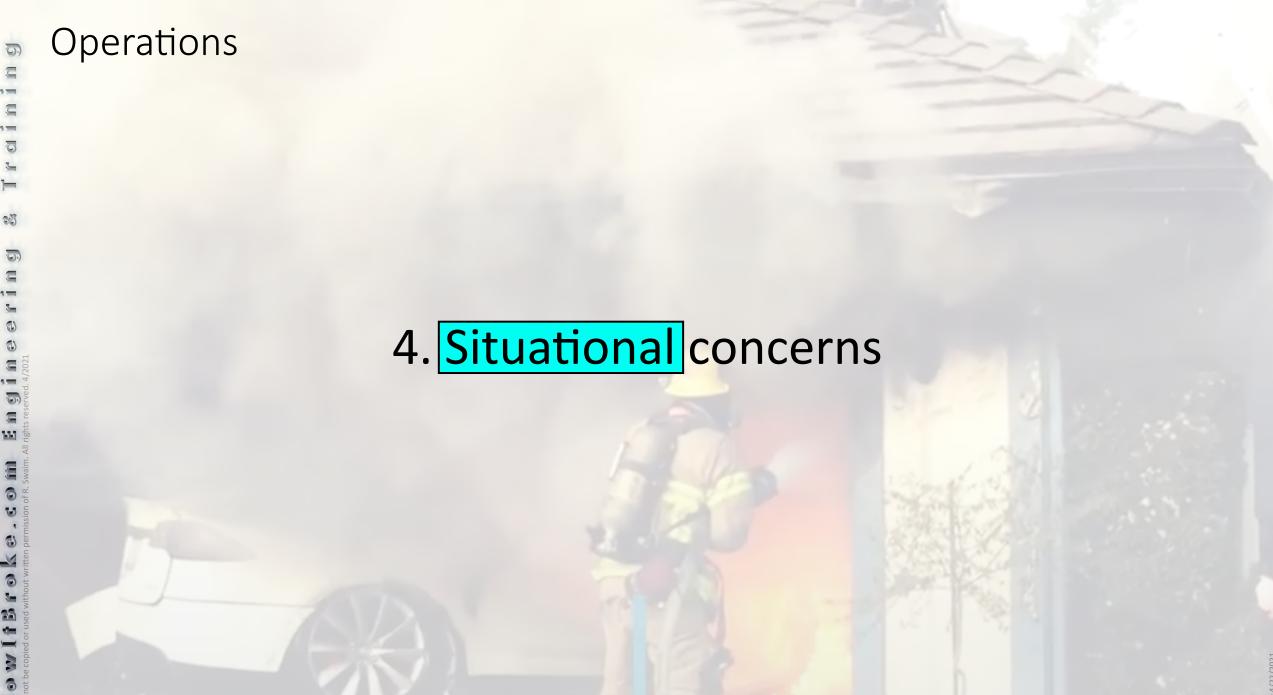
Do NOT to trap heat with foam



Fort Lauderdale FL, NTSB HWY18FH013

Related note – MSDS for Tesla Powerwall ESS recommends getting water into racks





### How to fit into existing firefighter work flow

Two major accomplishments for EV firefighters:

**2015**: ISO 17840 - Information For First And Second Responders, Road Vehicles

O. Rescue Sheet(s)

1. Identification / recognition

2. Immobilisation / stabilisation / lifting

3. Disable direct hazards / safety regulations

4. Access to the occupants

5. Stored energy / liquids / gases / solids6. In case of fire

7. In case of immersion

8. Towing / transportation / storage
 9. Important additional information

10. Explanation of the used symbols

**2018**: NFPA collected manufacturer emergency information

4. Situational Firefighters know this work flow so EV responses need to fit into it

### Background: When & where have EVs caught fire? Over half of cars burnt were on charge or not moving Most vehicles were under two years old

0)

ci î n i n

23

0

er I

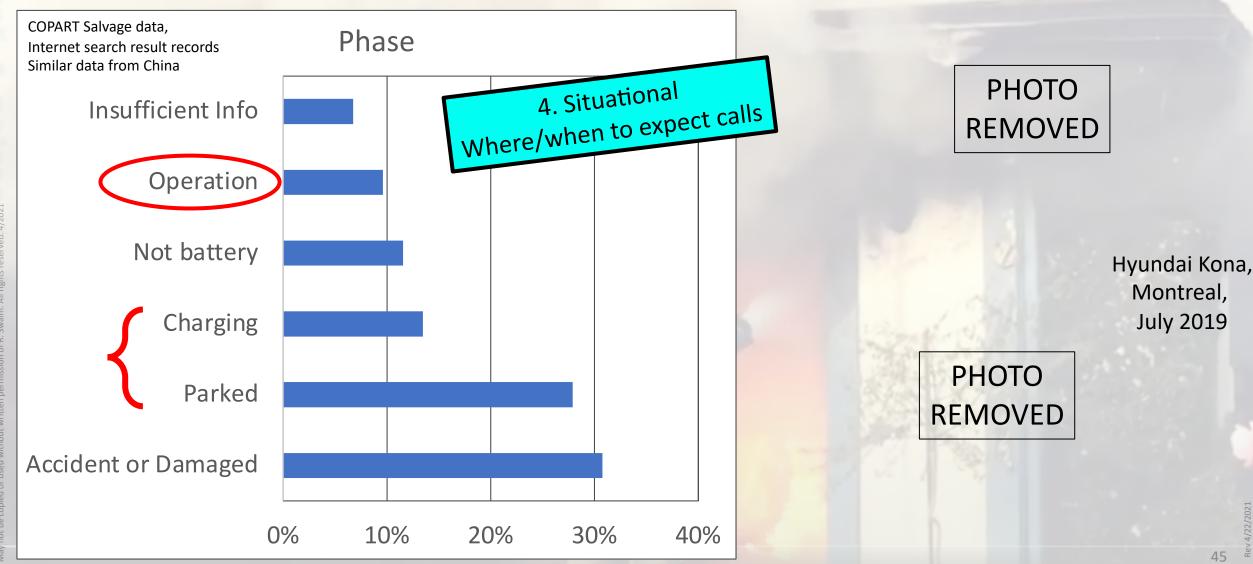
gine

E

1

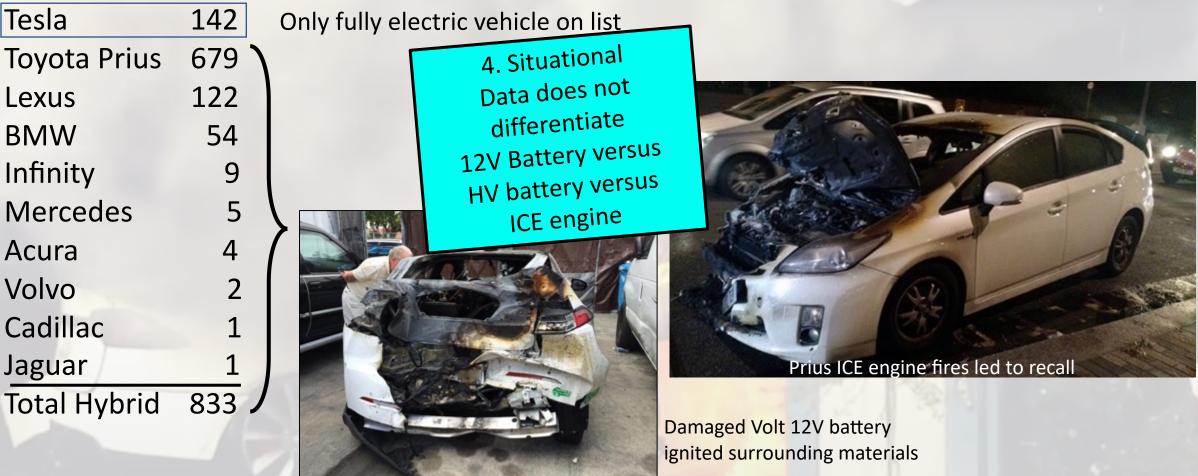
1 Brok

M (S



### Background: Which burn more often? <u>No data separates the electric from gasoline drive components</u>

Sample of total (not just burned) U.S. salvage vehicles equipped with traction batteries\*

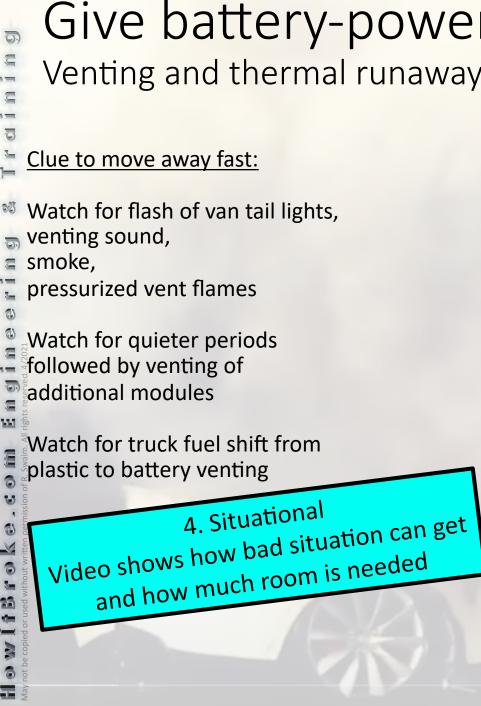


### Complacency is a FF concern

Salvage records show only 1 in 143 wrecked EVs experienced fire Note: This does <u>not</u> mean they became salvage <u>due to</u> fire. Typical EV accident







# Give battery-powered vehicles space

Venting and thermal runaway – NO explosions – Exceptional bad day example

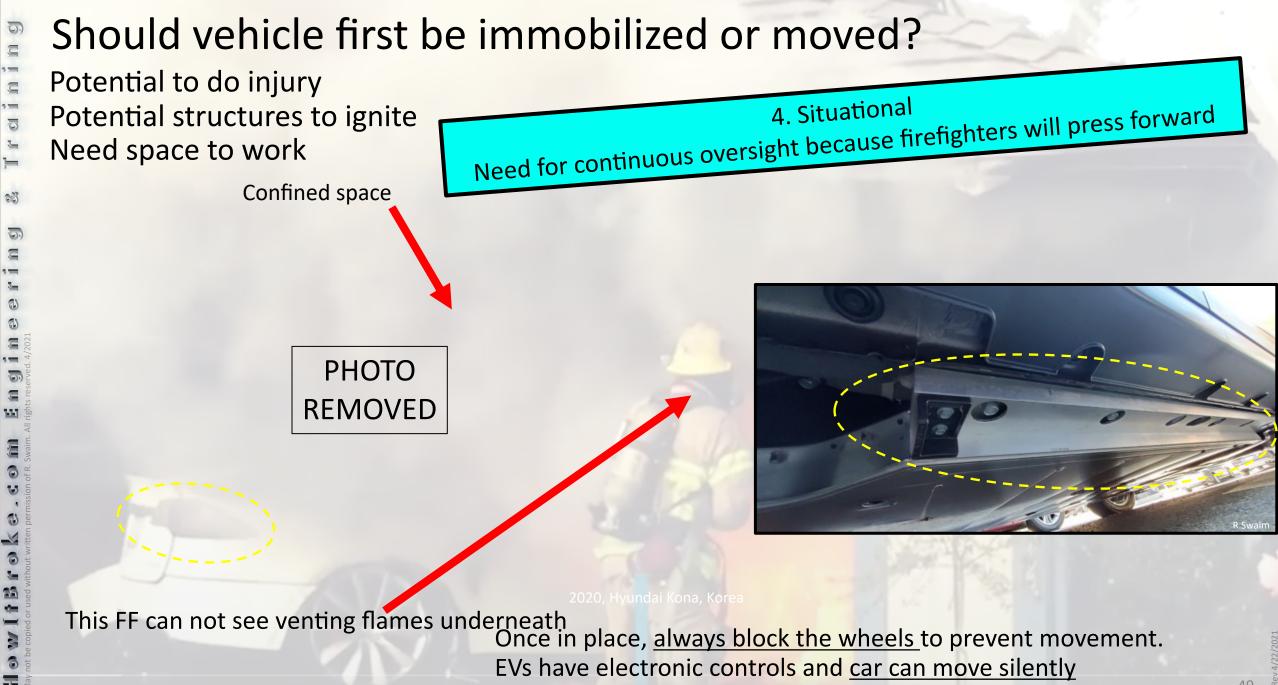
#### Clue to move away fast:

Watch for flash of van tail lights, venting sound, smoke, pressurized vent flames Watch for quieter periods followed by venting of additional modules Watch for truck fuel shift from plastic to battery venting

4. Situational

and how much room is needed

PHOTO REMOVED



### Extinguish

Think of individual fuels

Key for battery is to stop or slow propagation between cells

<u>Aggressive Method:</u> Plan on LOTS of water (ABC Dry chemical is ineffective)

or

**Defensive Method:** Let it burn out if isolated

4. Situational A. EV responses need to continually be aware of what fuel is burning. The background photo has three separate fuels in the battery, plastics in car, and house structure. B. Responders have two opposite ways to deal with EV fires

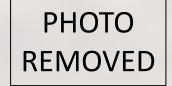


### Li-Ion already unseen in use on busses, trucks, and rail

Replacements for lead acid and Ni-Cad non-traction batteries

Cab controls, HVAC, and radios for 6 hours (advertised)

4. Situational concerns Smoke from large formats with passengers, in tunnels limits vehicle access, may limit battery access



n i n g

0

1 Brok

Plan responses: In a tunnel? With smoke? Flame? Passengers? Third rail?

PHOTO REMOVED

### **Concern about large batteries being introduced**

Lithium hybrids in US market as yard engines

Commuter light rail

g

0

30

0

Į.

N O

15

Locomotives used in Europe

Caterpillar locomotive up to 2.2 MW

GE up to 2.4 MW

New York MTA hybrid engine

About here students' eyes get big

#### **GE Transportation's Battery-Electric** Locomotive

4. Situational

JOULE

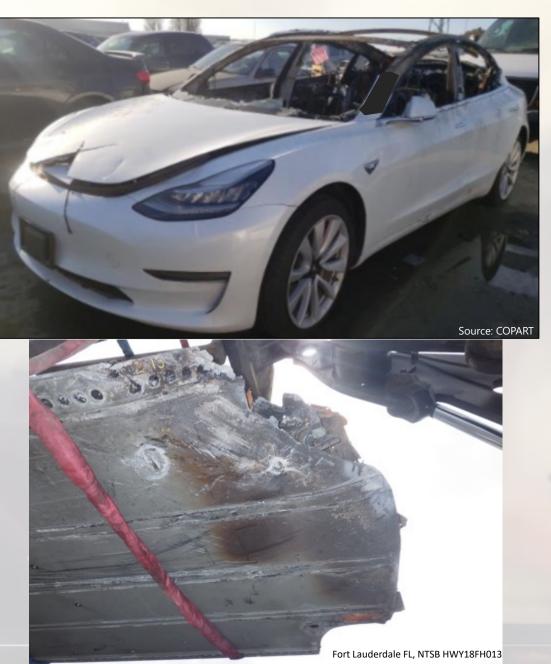
Massive power generation capabilities up to 2400 kWhrs fuel savings 10-15%

**Powered Axels** 

**Progress** Rai A Catom Har Con

**Energy Storage** 

### Summary and Investigating an EV fire



6 U

Train

83

heering

ENGI

Į.





2000

54

#### **UNDERWRITERS LABORATORIES®**

• Thank you for your time.

Session host

•

Speaker(s)

Tapesh Joshi, Ph.D. Tapesh.Joshi@ul.org

Robert "Bob" Swaim swaim@howitbroke.com

Learn more about our battery safety science research and initiatives at:

Web: ul.org/focus-areas/battery-safety Email: NFP.BatterySafety@ul.org



© 2021 Underwriters Laboratories Inc. All rights reserved. UL and the UL logo are trademarks of UL LLC.