

Delivery without drivers: Domino's, Ford team up for test

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This photo shows the specially designed delivery car that Ford Motor Co. and Domino's Pizza will use to test self-driving pizza deliveries. The car can drive itself, but it will have a backup driver. It lets customers tap in a code and retrieve their pizza from a warming space in the back seat. Photo from: AP Photo/Dee-Ann Durbin.

Imagine ordering a pizza. When it arrives, the doorbell doesn't ring. You get a text instead. Waiting for you outside is your meal — delivered by a car with no driver!

Domino's and Ford are teaming up to deliver pizzas using autonomous cars. These cars are steered by a computer. They don't need a driver. But that could cause some problems, too. The two companies want to see if customers will warm up to the idea.

Starting Wednesday, some pizzas in Domino's hometown of Ann Arbor, Michigan, will arrive in a self-driving Ford Fusion. The car will be outfitted with radars and a camera used for testing. A Ford engineer will be at the wheel. But the front windows will be darkened. That way, customers won't try to talk to the driver.

Experiment Tests Driverless Car Pizza Delivery

Normally, a delivery person would show up on the customer's doorstep with their order. People served by the self-driving cars won't have that choice. To claim their pizza, they will have to come out of their homes. They will also need to type a four-digit code into a keypad mounted on the car. The code will open the car's rear window, which covers a heated pizza-holding compartment. Then customers can grab their order. The compartment can carry up to four pizzas and five side orders, Domino's Pizza, Inc. said.

The experiment will help Domino's understand how customers will interact with a self-driving car, company president Russell Weiner said. There are lots of questions. Will people want the car to wait in their driveway or by the curb? Will they understand how to use the keypad? Will they come outside if it's raining or snowing? Will they put their pizza boxes on top of the car and mess up its expensive cameras?

"The majority of our questions are about the last 50 feet of the delivery experience," Weiner told reporters last week.

Are Flying Robotic Drones Next?

Domino's delivers 1 billion pizzas worldwide each year. To keep that up, it needs to stay ahead of the latest trends, Weiner said. The test will last six weeks. Then Domino's and Ford will decide what to do next. Domino's is also testing pizza delivery with flying robotic drones.

Weiner said Domino's has 100,000 drivers in the United States. In a driverless world, he said, those employees might take on a different role at the company.

Ford Motor Company has said it wants to develop a fully driverless vehicle by 2021. First, though, it needs to know what kinds of jobs companies would use self-driving cars for. Other driverless car companies think delivering food might be a smart business idea. Truck company Otto is one example. One of its self-driving trucks delivered 50,000 cans of beer in Colorado last fall.

Sherif Marakby is Ford's second-in-command of self-driving and electric cars. He said Ford isn't making a driverless car just for the sake of technology. "There are so many practical things that we need to learn," he said.

Only one car will operate in Ann Arbor. It has a special black-and-white paint job to mark it as a test vehicle.

Customers in the test area will be chosen randomly when they order a pizza. Then they will get a phone call to make sure they're okay with a self-driving car. If they agree, they'll get a text message letting them know when the car is pulling up.

Quiz

- 1 Read the introduction [paragraphs 1-3].
Select the paragraph from the section that shows how the test will make it seem as though the cars are completely driverless, even though they are not.
- 2 Read the section titled "Are Flying Robotic Drones Next?"
Which sentence from the section shows a reason why Ford has not yet developed a fully driverless car?
- (A) Ford Motor Company has said it wants to develop a fully driverless vehicle by 2021.
 - (B) First, though, it needs to know what kinds of jobs companies would use self-driving cars for.
 - (C) Other driverless car companies think delivering food might be a smart business idea.
 - (D) Sheriff Marakby is Ford's second-in-command of self-driving and electric cars.
- 3 Which of the following are two MAIN ideas from the article?
- 1. *Ford and Domino's are teaming up to create self-driving cars.*
 - 2. *Ford and Domino's are teaming up to try out driverless pizza delivery.*
 - 3. *Ford and Domino's want to test out driverless pizza delivery to address any possible problems.*
 - 4. *Ford and Domino's believe there may be too many potential problems with driverless delivery to make it possible.*
- (A) 1 and 2
 - (B) 1 and 4
 - (C) 2 and 3
 - (D) 3 and 4
- 4 Which sentence from the article would be MOST important to include in a summary of the article?
- (A) Normally, a delivery person would show up on the customer's doorstep with their order.
 - (B) The experiment will help Domino's understand how customers will interact with a self-driving car.
 - (C) "The majority of our questions are about the last 50 feet of the delivery experience."
 - (D) In a driverless world, he said, those employees might take on a different role at the company.