

Musk Says Tesla Has Finally Made a Ready-to-Deploy Solar Roof



Almost three years after Tesla Inc. Chief Executive Officer Elon Musk unveiled solar roof shingles as part of his push to buy SolarCity, the automaker says it finally has a version of the tiles that it can mass produce.

“It’s been quite hard,” Musk said on a conference call late Friday. “Roofs need to last a long time. When you add electrification to the roof, it’s a fair bit of complexity.”

The sleek roof is a key part of Tesla’s push to revive its struggling solar business. Musk unveiled the product in 2016, but the company hasn’t been able to bring production up to full scale. The photovoltaic tiles are designed to resemble regular shingles, unlike solar panels atop a roof.

The latest version of the shingles was introduced after Tesla lost its status as the biggest U.S. rooftop solar company. It's also been sued by Walmart Inc. over fires at a half-dozen of the big-box stores that had Tesla solar systems, and the company still faces litigation from shareholders over the controversial SolarCity acquisition.

Signs of a Bounce Back

Tesla's quarterly solar installations increase for first time in a year

Tesla initially said it would have a slow roll-out of the solar roof. But issues with aesthetics, cost and manufacturing process have dogged production. At one point in 2018, Tesla was making enough solar-roof shingles for just three to five homes a week.

Earlier this year, Musk declared 2019 as "the year of the solar roof." In July, he tweeted that Tesla was "spooling up production line rapidly," and that he hoped to manufacture about 1,000 roofs each week by year-end.

On the call Friday to discuss the third version of the roof, he reiterated the goal of getting to 1,000 roofs per week in the next several months but acknowledged that there might be setbacks.

"It's an odd and weird product," he said. "Why would anyone make a solar roof? How strange. But it just is a thing that should be. So we're going to make it."