

# California Guardrail Safety Under Scrutiny After High-Profile Crashes and Rising EV Risks

*Legal Expert Warns of Rising Liability as Recent Crashes Expose Design Flaws in Highway Safety Barriers*

WEST COVINA, CA, UNITED STATES, June 16, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A series of harrowing crashes across Northern California has thrust the state's highway guardrails into the spotlight, prompting urgent calls for reform and raising critical questions about whether these safety barriers are truly protecting motorists—or, in some cases, putting them in greater danger.

“

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*Lem Garcia*

## High-Profile Incidents Spark Outcry

In early 2025, [a 19-year-old woman in Plumas County survived a terrifying ordeal](#) when her vehicle was pierced by a guardrail during a storm on Highway 70. The rail penetrated both the driver and passenger seats, leaving

her with moderate injuries but sparking widespread concern about the design and effectiveness of California's roadside barriers. In another tragic incident on Interstate 5, [a vehicle broke through a guardrail and rolled down an embankment](#), resulting in a fatality and renewed scrutiny from both the public and safety advocates.

These incidents are not isolated. Data from the California Office of Traffic Safety and the Federal Highway Administration show that while California has made strides in reducing overall traffic fatalities, the state still recorded [3,858 roadway deaths and over 16,600 serious injuries in 2023](#). As California moves toward its “Zero Fatalities and Serious Injuries” goal, the role of guardrails—intended as life-saving devices—has come under intense examination.

## Design Flaws and Installation Issues Under Fire

Survivors and families affected by guardrail-related crashes are demanding answers. Key concerns include whether guardrails are being properly designed, installed, and maintained to actually save lives. Some victims have called for reforms such as bending guardrail ends into the ground or adding more cushioning to prevent impalement and catastrophic injuries.

Investigations have revealed that certain guardrail systems, such as the X-LITE and Trinity ET-

Plus, have been linked to fatal accidents and severe injuries across the country. In California, the X-LITE system was discontinued after being implicated in at least nine fatal crashes, with similar concerns raised about the Trinity ET-Plus design. Lawsuits allege that unapproved design changes made these systems more likely to lock up during a crash, causing the rail to pierce vehicles rather than absorb impact as intended

Guardrails are supposed to protect us, not become a spear in a collision," said Lem Garcia, Personal Injury Attorney at Lem Garcia Law. "When a safety device fails, the consequences can be catastrophic—and families deserve answers and accountability.

### The Electric Vehicle Challenge

A new complication emerges as California leads the nation in electric vehicle adoption. Recent crash tests showed that a nearly 4-ton Rivian electric pickup truck tore through standard guardrails "like tissue paper," raising questions about whether existing safety infrastructure can handle the weight of next-generation vehicles.

"We have guardrails designed in the 1970s trying to stop vehicles from 2025," Garcia explained. "The weight differential between a 3,000-pound sedan and a 7,000-pound electric truck is enormous, but our safety barriers haven't evolved."

### Legal Rights and Accountability

Under California law, victims of guardrail accidents have the right to pursue claims against manufacturers, designers, government agencies, or contractors if the guardrail was defective, improperly installed, or created a dangerous road condition. Recent lawsuits have targeted manufacturers for design changes that increased fatality risks, and public agencies can be held liable if they failed to fix known hazards or warn drivers.

With California's ambitious highway safety goals, advocates are urging the state to accelerate the removal of outdated or dangerous guardrail systems and adopt proven safety measures. "We need to ensure that every mile of guardrail on our highways meets the highest standards for design, installation, and maintenance," Garcia added. "Lives depend on it."

Garcia advocates for an immediate comprehensive review of California's guardrail infrastructure, including mandatory testing against heavier electric vehicles and updated installation standards to prevent impalement injuries.

"Every driver deserves to know that the safety equipment on our highways will protect them, not become the instrument of their injury," Garcia concluded. "These recent survivors are living proof that we need to do better."

### About Lem

Lem Garcia is a Personal Injury Attorney and the Founder of Lem Garcia Law in West Covina, California. He specializes in car, truck, and motorcycle accident cases, slip and fall injuries and

wrongful death claims. Known for his personalized approach, He is known to provide clear communication and hands-on legal representation to ensure his clients understand their rights and feel supported throughout the process. With a track record of successful settlements and courtroom wins, Lem's dedication to his clients has earned him a strong reputation for trust and integrity in Southern California's legal community. For more information, visit <https://www.lemgarcialaw.com/>

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