

Takata Airbag Recall: Everything You Need to Know

What this recall means to you and what actions you should take

By Consumer Reports

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Vehicles made by 19 different automakers have been recalled to replace frontal airbags on the driver's side or passenger's side, or both in what NHTSA has called "the largest and most complex safety recall in U.S. history." The airbags, made by major parts supplier Takata, were mostly installed in cars from model year 2002 through 2015. Some of those airbags could deploy explosively, injuring or even killing car occupants.

At the heart of the problem is the airbag's inflator, a metal cartridge loaded with propellant wafers, which in some cases has ignited with explosive force. If the inflator housing ruptures in a crash, metal shards from the airbag can be sprayed throughout the passenger cabin—a potentially disastrous outcome from a supposedly life-saving device.

NHTSA has determined the root cause of the problem: airbags that use ammonium nitrate-based propellant

without a chemical drying agent. As postulated early on, environmental moisture, high temperatures, and age as associated with the defect that can improperly inflate the airbags and even send shrapnel into the occupant. To date, there have been 15 deaths due to this problem in the U.S. Worldwide, NHTSA reports there have been at least 23 deaths and 300 injuries.

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Through various announcements, the recall has tripled in size over the past year. It is expected that the inflator recall will impact more than 37 million vehicles in the U.S., involving 49.5 million inflators.

For millions of vehicles in the recall but not under a stop-driving order, NHTSA has prioritized delivery of parts to models and areas with the highest concentration of Takata incidents, NHTSA told CR.

“It was not possible for all replacement parts to be available right away, and some vehicles were at much higher risk of a

dangerous airbag explosion than others,” agency spokeswoman Karen Aldana said.

Visit www.safercar.gov to check the recall status of your vehicles.

Recent Timeline

July 17: Ford’s class-action settlement agreement over Takata airbags promises to give consumers some relief. It’s the seventh such deal cut by the class-action attorneys handling claims against the 19 car companies. The owners of Ford vehicles who agree to the deal will receive free loaner cars while waiting for their Takata repairs, as well as small cash payments for their out-of-pocket expenses.

June 7: NHTSA has urged Florida car owners to check their Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) to see if their car is involved and if so, to take action. There is concern that South Florida, in particular, is a high risk area due to the weather and completion rate. “I am deeply concerned over the high number of unrepaired defective air bags in vehicles here in South Florida,” said King. “I cannot stress strongly enough the urgency of this recall - these air bags can be deadly. If your vehicle is under recall, do not delay in getting it to your dealer for a free repair. It could save your life or the life of someone you love.”

March 20, 2018: Senate report highlights that only six of the 17 automakers involved in the wide-ranging Takata airbag recall have adequate loaner car policies for customers that are waiting for parts to become available. The companies that have the most comprehensive

loaner policies with the fewest restrictions are BMW, Fiat Chrysler, Honda, Nissan, Subaru, and Toyota.

February 23, 2018: A U.S. bankruptcy judge in Delaware approved a plan negotiated by Takata and its creditors to create a trust fund to compensate the victims of exploding airbag inflators. Automakers are giving up some monetary claims against Takata and agreeing to contribute \$90 million to \$137 million to the trust fund.

February 12, 2018: New advisory raises the number of 2006 Rangers involved to 30,603 in the U.S., says NHTSA. Mazda is expanding its advisory to include 1,955 B-Series pickup trucks from model year 2006, up from the original 160. These vehicles are under a rare stop-driving recall, with federal regulators urging owners to tow them to dealers to have Takata airbag inflators replaced.

January 11, 2018: NHTSA advises owners of 2006 Ford Ranger pickup trucks to stop driving them after the agency confirmed a second Takata airbag-related death involving the specific truck and model year.

January 9, 2018: Takata expanded its already massive recall by an additional 3.3 million airbag inflators over the same concerns that they might explode and spray dangerous metal fragments into the vehicle's cabin. This was the third of five planned recalls. More vehicles are scheduled to be recalled later.

July 11, 2017: Takata announces recall action will add 2.7 million vehicles from Ford, Mazda, and Nissan that use airbag inflators that contain calcium sulfate, a chemical that serves as a drying agent.

June 26, 2017: Takata files for bankruptcy.

March 2, 2017: Ford recalls 32,000 2016-17 Ford Edge, 2016-17 Lincoln MKX and 2017 Lincoln Continental vehicles to replace the driver frontal airbag module.

February 28, 2017: Takata has finally pleaded guilty to deceiving automakers about the safety of its airbags. Now automakers are disputing charges that they knowingly installed the defective airbags in their cars.

January 12, 2017: Reports of an expected \$1 billion penalty against Takata are published, with the expectation that \$25 million will be a criminal penalty and \$850 million would be paid as restitution to automakers impacted by the recall.

Ford expands its recall to 816,000 Ford, Lincoln, and Mercury vehicle made in North America, including 654,695 sold in the U.S. Most vehicles were included in prior recall actions, but this move adds the passenger-side airbag inflators.

Toyota also expands its recalls to 543,000 additional vehicles in the U.S., including both Toyota and Lexus brand models, to address front passenger airbags. Notably, this adds the 2012 model year to the recall list for many vehicles.

December 9, 2016: A more aggressive recall schedule was announced by the Department of Transportation, with priority given to the riskiest models.

October 20, 2016: NHTSA confirms the 11th fatality. It occurred in a 2001 Honda Civic, a vehicle that was recalled in 2008. The recall had not been performed on this specific car. Nine of the 11 Takata-related deaths in the U.S. have occurred in Acura and Honda models. Honda reports that there are just under 300,000 affected vehicles that have not

been repaired or accounted for. Key lesson: Take recall notices seriously.

July 22, 2016: Mazda announced that it is recalling additional B-Series pickup trucks from the 2007 to 2009 model years. The recall covers passenger airbags.

June 30, 2016: NHTSA announces that certain 2001-2003 Honda and Acura models have a much higher risk of ruptures during airbag deployments. U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx said in a statement, “Folks should not drive these vehicles unless they are going straight to a dealer to have them repaired immediately, free of charge.” The affected models are listed below.

June 21, 2016: Fiat Chrysler Automobiles announces it will end NAFTA-market production of vehicles with non-desiccated ammonium-nitrate Takata air bag inflators by the end of June, with global production to end by mid-September. The 2016 Jeep Wrangler uses this type of inflator in the passenger-side airbag. Customers will be advised of vehicles that are so-equipped, and will be advised that the vehicles will be recalled in the future.

June 14, 2016: Mitsubishi, Toyota, and Volkswagen have all confirmed the new vehicles they are selling that contain Takata’s ammonium nitrate-based propellant in driver and/or passenger frontal airbag inflators without a chemical drying agent, also known as a desiccant. These vehicles are listed below. Fiat Chrysler has yet to announce which vehicle they are selling with this type of airbag. While none of the models are part of the current recall, they all will have to be recalled by 2018. According to NHTSA, as of May 20, 2016, a total of 8,432,805 airbags have been replaced.

June 2, 2016: Audi, BMW, General Motors, Jaguar/Land Rover, and Mercedes-Benz have added nearly 2.5 million more U.S. vehicles to the list of cars with defective Takata airbags.

June 1, 2016: Fiat Chrysler, Mitsubishi, Toyota, and Volkswagen confirm in a [report from Florida Senator Bill Nelson \(PDF\)](#) that they are selling some new vehicles with airbags that contain Takata's ammonium nitrate-based propellant in driver and passenger frontal airbag inflators without a chemical drying agent, also known as a desiccant. These vehicles will have to be recalled by 2018.

May 4, 2016: The massive Takata airbag recall is more than doubling in size, with NHTSA announcing that it is expanding the recall to include 35-40 million airbag inflators to be replaced through 2019. This tally is in addition to the 28.8 million airbags already recalled. Thus far, NHTSA shows that 8,168,860 airbags have been replaced.

April 13, 2016: Regulators state that there are 85 million potentially defective, unrecalled Takata airbag inflators that will need to be recalled—unless Takata can prove they are safe. So far, the recall has included 28.8 million airbags in the U.S.

April 7, 2016: A 17-year-old girl from Texas named as the 10th U.S. victim. She was driving a 2002 Honda Civic. Her death is attributed to shrapnel from the exploding airbag striking her neck. NHTSA shows that 7,522,533 airbags have been repaired.

February 12, 2016: NHTSA expands its list of impacted models. Thus far, 7,122,510 airbags have been repaired.

December 23, 2015: NHTSA announces another U.S. fatality due to the questionable Takata airbag inflator, underscoring the need for consumer to have their cars repaired as soon as possible. Further, there have been changes to the official list of affected vehicles, which are reflected in this omnibus story.

November 3, 2015: NHTSA imposes a record civil penalty of up to \$200 million against Takata. (Of that, \$70 million is a cash penalty, with an additional \$130 million charge if Takata fails to meet its commitments.) Plus, the government agency requires Takata to phase out the manufacturer and sale of inflators that use the risky propellant and recall all Takata ammonium nitrate inflators currently on the road—unless the company can prove they are safe or can show it has determined why its inflators are prone to rupture.

October 9, 2015: Honda releases an update on the Takata airbag recall, stating its progress in reaching out to consumers and its recall repair completion rate.

June 19, 2015: NHTSA and Honda confirm that an 8th fatality was attributable to a Takata airbag rupture, which took place in Los Angeles in September of 2014. The car was identified as a rented 2001 Honda Civic. Honda said the car had been under recall since 2009 but that various owners, including the small rental company in Los Angeles, had failed to have the repairs made.

June 17, 2015: NHTSA VIN look-up tool is updated to include all affected models. Often, there can be a slight delay between announcements and when data is available.

June 16, 2015: Toyota expands years for recall on previously announced models, adding 1,365,000 additional vehicles.

June 15, 2015: Honda expands national recall on Honda Accord.

June 15, 2015: NHTSA and Honda confirm that Takata airbag rupture was implicated in a seventh death. The driver of a 2005 Honda Civic was fatally injured following a crash on April 5, in Louisiana.

June 4, 2015: Reuters reports that at least 400,000 replaced airbag inflators will need to be recalled and replaced again.

May 29, 2015: Chrysler, Mitsubishi, Subaru, and General Motors added the vehicle identification numbers (VIN) of the impacted vehicles to their recall websites.

May 28, 2015: NHTSA and vehicle manufacturers revealed the additional models included in previous recall announcements.

May 19, 2015: DOT released a statement saying that Takata acknowledges airbag inflators it produced for certain vehicles were faulty. It expanded certain regional recalls to national ones, and included inflators fitted in certain Daimler Trucks in the recalled vehicles. In all, the recall was expanded to a staggering 33.8 million vehicles. That number includes the roughly 17 million vehicles previously recalled by affected automakers.

February 20, 2015: NHTSA fined Takata \$14,000 per day for not cooperating fully with the agency's investigation into the airbag problems.

January 18, 2015: The driver of a 2002 Honda Accord became the fifth person in the United States thought to have been killed by an exploding airbag inflator.

December 18, 2014: Ford issued a statement adding an additional 447,310 vehicles to the recall.

December 9, 2014: Honda issued a statement saying it will comply with NHTSA and expand its recall to a national level. This brings the number of affected Honda/Acura vehicles to 5.4 million.

November 18, 2014: NHTSA called for the recalls to be expanded to a national level.

November 7, 2014: New York Times published a report claiming Takata was aware of dangerous defects with its airbags years before the company filed paperwork with federal regulators.

Putting the Dangers in Perspective

Fifteen fatalities and more than 100 injuries have been linked to the Takata airbags in the U.S., and in some cases the incidents were horrific, with metal shards penetrating a driver's face and neck. As awful as they are, such incidents are very rare. In June of 2015, Takata stated that it was aware of 88 ruptures in total: 67 on the driver's side and 21 on the passenger's side out of what it calculated was just over 1.2 million airbag deployments spread over 15 years. Despite these figures, airbags in general are not a danger. The Department of Transportation estimates that between 1987 and 2012, frontal airbags have saved 37,000 lives.

Based on information provided by Takata and acting under a special campaign by NHTSA, the involved automakers are responding to this safety risk by recalling all vehicles that

have these specific airbags. While the automakers are prioritizing resources by focusing on high-humidity areas, they shouldn't stop there. We encourage a national approach to the risks, as vehicles tend to travel across state borders, especially in the used-car market.

For a historical perspective, AutoSafety.org has compiled a list of airbag recalls over time.

<u>Acura</u>	<u>Lexus</u>
<u>Audi</u>	<u>Mazda</u>
<u>BMW</u>	<u>Mercedes-Benz</u>
<u>Chrysler (includes Dodge, Jeep)</u>	<u>Mitsubishi</u>
<u>Ferrari</u>	<u>Nissan</u>
<u>Ford/Lincoln</u>	<u>Subaru</u>
<u>General Motors (includes Pontiac, Saab)</u>	<u>Tesla</u>
<u>Honda</u>	<u>Toyota / Scion</u>
<u>Infiniti</u>	<u>Volkswagen</u>
<u>Jaguar/Land Rover</u>	<u>NHTSA VIN lookup tool</u>