

Automakers expand passenger air bag recalls

December 2 2014, by Tom Krisher



This undated photo provided by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety shows the frontal offset crash test of the 2005 Subaru Legacy. Documents posted Tuesday, Dec. 2, 2014 by U.S. safety regulators say Subaru is expanding a previous recall of five models, including the 2005 Legacy, to fix potentially faulty passenger air bags in high-humidity states. (AP Photo/Insurance Institute for Highway Safety)

Under pressure from U.S. safety regulators, two automakers are expanding recalls or adding them to fix potentially faulty passenger air bags in high-humidity states.

Documents posted Tuesday by the government say Subaru is expanding a previous recall of five models. Mitsubishi is recalling one model, the 2004 and 2005 Lancer small car.

Both companies have cars equipped with air bags made by Takata Corp. The bags can inflate with too much force and spew metal shrapnel into the passenger compartment. At least five people have been killed by the faulty air bag inflators.

Previous recalls were limited to Florida, Hawaii, Puerto Rico and several other territories. The new Subaru and Mitsubishi recalls now cover those areas as well as southern Georgia and coastal areas of Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas and South Carolina. Different automakers have different recall boundaries, and the government is trying to bring them all into line to avoid confusion.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration says airborne moisture can get into the chemical that makes the air bags inflate, causing it to burn too fast. That can blow apart a metal inflator canister. The agency has evidence that passenger air bags can malfunction in areas with average annual dew points of 60 degrees or above.

The Subaru recall affects the 2003 to 2005 Outback, Legacy and Baja, as well as the 2004 and 2005 Impreza, and the 2005 Saab 9-2X, which was made by Subaru.

Neither Subaru nor Mitsubishi released numbers of vehicles covered by the new recalls.

The government is demanding a national recall of Takata driver's air bag inflators. The company has until midnight to respond to the demand from NHTSA or face legal action and civil fines.

Company officials thus far have not commented on the demand, but they did comply with a data request from the agency on Monday.

NHTSA says two incidents outside the high-humidity zone justify the national driver's air bag recall. But the agency says it doesn't have data to justify a national [recall](#) of passenger side [air bags](#).

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