

Fiat Chrysler safety chief to retire after troublesome year

October 27 2015, by Tom Krisher



In this Thursday, July 2, 2015, file photo, Fiat Chrysler Automobiles Senior Vice President Safety and Regulation Compliance Scott Kunselman speaks during a hearing at the Transportation Department in Washington. The company said Tuesday, Oct. 27, 2015, in a statement that Kunselman will step down Nov. 30 as senior vice president of safety and regulatory affairs. A successor will be named later. The move comes after the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration in July hit Chrysler with a record \$105 million penalty for violating laws in 23 recalls covering more than 11 million vehicles. (AP Photo/Luis M. Alvarez, File)

Fiat Chrysler's safety chief is retiring from the company after a

tumultuous year of conflict with U.S. government regulators.

The company said in a statement that Scott Kunselman will step down Nov. 30 as senior vice president of safety and regulatory affairs. A successor will be named later.

The move comes after the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration in July hit Chrysler with a record \$105 million penalty for violating laws in 23 recalls covering more than 11 million vehicles. The company admitted in an agreement with the agency that it failed to do recalls or notify customers in a timely manner, didn't fix recalls properly and failed to report safety information to NHTSA.

The company also is under investigation for failing to report some deaths and injuries to the agency as required by law. NHTSA said its investigators found a discrepancy in reporting by Fiat Chrysler and notified the company in late July. FCA investigated and told the agency it found a lot of under-reporting.

"This represents a significant failure to meet a manufacturer's safety responsibilities," NHTSA Administrator Mark Rosekind said at the time.

Automakers are required to report vehicle-related deaths and injuries to NHTSA so it can look for trends, spot safety problems and seek recalls if necessary. Fiat Chrysler said it would cooperate with the government and make sure the problem doesn't happen again.

A preliminary inquiry by NHTSA found that the reporting failures resulted from numerous problems with the company's systems for gathering and reporting data, Rosekind said. He added that the agency will take "appropriate action" after further investigation into the scope and cause of the problems.

Fiat Chrysler wouldn't say how many deaths and injuries went unreported or when the reporting lapses happened.

Kunselman represented the company at a government public hearing on the recall problems held in June. He admitted the problems and pledged to do a better job.

Much of the trouble happened before Kunselman took the job in August of 2014. He has been with the company for 30 years, also serving as head of purchasing and senior vice president of engineering.

He'll take a senior position in the administration at Oakland University in the Detroit suburb of Rochester Hills, Michigan, starting Dec. 1, Fiat Chrysler said in a statement.

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