

US investigating deadly Hyundai, Kia airbag failures

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Airbags contain a chemical propellant which can inflate a bag within 0.0005 seconds

The US National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has opened an investigation into a series of deadly crashes in which airbags in Hyundai

and Kia cars failed to inflate.

The administration's Office of Defects Investigation (ODI) "is currently aware of six crashes with significant collision-related damage events involving Hyundai and Kia models where [airbags](#) failed to deploy in frontal crashes," which four people died and six were hurt, its website said.

The "failure of the airbag control unit (ACU) may prevent the frontal airbags from deploying in the event of a [crash](#)," it said.

Hyundai filed a report on the issue at the end of February that led to a recall, but the firm said it had not yet "identified a remedy."

The recall involved 155,000 Hyundai Sonata vehicles produced between December 2009 and September 2010 at their plant in the southern state of Alabama.

"Hyundai is aware of three rare and unique accidents where airbag control circuitry was confirmed to be damaged and a fourth accident is under investigation," the South Korean automaker said.

"We are actively investigating what exactly causes the airbag control unit to become damaged in these specific types of [accidents](#)," it said.

Kia is partially owned by Hyundai, and together they form the world's fifth largest automaking group. A Kia spokesperson was unavailable for comment.

The ODI investigation, which was opened Friday, will evaluate the scope of the recall, will determine if Kia and other manufacturers are using the same or similar airbag control unit as Hyundai, and review factors that may be causing the failures, it said.

An estimated 425,000 cars may be affected by the issue.

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