

Can't type? Apple faces class-action lawsuit over defective MacBook keyboards

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Apple faces a proposed class action lawsuit over allegedly defective "butterfly" type keyboards in the company's MacBook and MacBook Pro laptops.

The suit, filed Friday in the Northern District of California by law firms Girard Gibbs and Chimicles & Tikellis, claims thousands of consumers have experienced the defect whereby one or more "keys stick and no longer register keystrokes," which may occur when "minimal amounts of dust or debris accumulates under or around a key." When that happens, "the MacBook can no longer serve its core function: typing," the suit alleges.

It was brought by plaintiffs Zixuan Rao and Kyle Barbaro, each an owner of a MacBook Pro. The suit charges that complaints of [keyboard](#) failures began to occur soon after the 2015 MacBook was launched and that despite being aware of the keyboard defect, Apple equipped future-[model](#) MacBook and MacBook Pro laptops with the butterfly keyboard and continued selling these machines to consumers at premium prices.

The keys on these butterfly mechanism models, which felt flatter than other models when introduced on the 2015 MacBook, allowed for a keyboard that was 40% thinner than one using the "scissor" type mechanism that was the design norm.

Apple has not publicly answered the complaint or responded to a USA TODAY request for comment.

There certainly have been numerous complaints in online forums. And more than 23,000 people and counting have signed an online petition at Change.org asking Apple to "recall every MacBook Pro released since late 2016, and replace the keyboards on all of them with new, redesigned keyboards that just work."

AppleInsider has collected service data and found that "the 2016 MacBook Pro keyboard is failing twice as often in the first year of use as the 2014 or 2015 MacBook Pro models." The online site added that the 2017 model is faring better, "but not by a lot."

The suit was brought on behalf of people who purchased model year 2015 or later MacBook laptops and model year 2016 or later MacBook Pro laptops.

Apart from its long-term reliability (which I couldn't judge at the time), I never cozied up to the butterfly keyboard on the MacBook I tested, though I did feel that a refined second-generation butterfly mechanism used in the MacBook Pro I reviewed in Nov. 2016 represented marked progress.

Apple does provide a one-year warranty on the laptops, and has offered a support page on its website in which it explains how to clean the keyboard on the MacBook or MacBook Pro with compressed air. But the class action suit claims Apple's troubleshooting steps do not fix the problem or "prevent the keyboard from failing," and that Apple "routinely refuses to honor its warranty obligations," and instead "advises MacBook owners to try self-help remedies that it knows will not result in a permanent repair."

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