

SAFETY SENSE

Speaking Up About Vehicle Safety

(NAPSA)—If you think there's no use in complaining, think again. Consumer complaints about vehicle safety have sparked a number of auto recalls that have helped keep American roads safe.

How many complaints does it take to initiate a recall investigation? There is no set number. However, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), every consumer complaint counts.

The NHTSA is perhaps most recognized for its "5-star government crash test ratings." However, the agency also oversees and manages the recall of defective vehicles. While most recalls are initiated by manufacturers, NHTSA-influenced or -initiated recalls typically result in a greater number of individual vehicles being recalled each year.

To encourage consumer input, the agency uses every available avenue. Efforts to get unsafe vehicles off the road are fueled by calls to the DOT Vehicle Safety Hotline, complaints sent by mail, and reports filed via the Web site at www.safercar.gov. Visitors to the site can fill out an online complaint form, at their convenience, and with relative ease of use.

Every phone call, Internet report or complaint letter to NHTSA is carefully reviewed by vehicle safety experts and the complaint is posted (with names and personal identifiers removed to protect privacy) on the agency Web site.



Auto safety recalls are often sparked by consumer complaints.

The agency's technical staff members continuously monitor all complaints to determine trends and next steps. As soon as a trend is suspected and the issue poses a potential safety risk, the agency opens an official recall investigation, with the ultimate goal of saving lives caused by motor vehicle failure and crashes. It could be your vehicle safety complaint that signals agency engineers to open an investigation.

The group says that people having problems with their vehicles that they think are safety related shouldn't hesitate to complain. Direct input from consumers is invaluable to the agency's ability to fulfill its mission and improve service when it matters most: when lives are at stake.

If you think your vehicle has a defect, visit www.safercar.gov or call the Vehicle Safety Hotline at (888) 327-4236. You can also write to NHTSA, Office of Defects Investigation (NVS-210); 400 7th St., SW; Washington, DC 20590.