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## **News Release**

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## **The Safety Institute Announces Quarterly Vehicle Safety Watch List: Tracking Top 15 Potential Vehicle Defects**

Today, The Safety Institute is releasing its latest quarterly Vehicle Safety Watch List. For the third quarter in a row, potential power steering issues affecting the 2012 Ford Focus top the list. (See first and second quarterly Watch List). In addition, Toyota continues to occupy several spots for potential structure and unintended acceleration claims; General Motors remains on the list for potential service brake issues. None of these issues have been investigated by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) or remedied by the manufacturer.

The Safety Institute launched the Watch List in June to document the early signs of defects in the U.S. fleet. The reports also help identify potential failures to effectively fix known vehicle issues and provide evidence-based data for directing investigatory resources. The Watch List is a tool for researchers, safety advocates, attorneys, consumers, journalists and federal agencies to identify trends.

This release comes at a time when NHTSA has recently come under fire by Congress for failing to investigate defects in GM ignition switches and Takata airbags. On January 8, NHTSA levied a \$70 million fine against Honda -- the largest in the agency's history -- for failing to report half of its death and injury claims.

“The Vehicle Safety Watch List is an example of leveraging already available data to help prioritize investigative resources. This type of tool can help identify and potentially prevent costly safety crises that not only cause harm to consumers but take extra

resources to manage” said Sean Kane, The Safety Institute’s founder and president of the board.

Using publicly available data such as NHTSA consumer complaints in the Vehicle Owners Questionnaire (VOQ) database, manufacturer-reported Early Warning Reports on deaths and injuries, and the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS), The Safety Institute Watch List identifies potential motor vehicle safety defects that merit additional engineering and statistical review. The Safety Institute queried all reports forwarded to NHTSA from the third quarter of 2013 through the second quarter of 2014 for all deaths and injuries claims involving light vehicles made to the following manufacturers: BMW of North America, LLC; Chrysler Group LLC, Ford Motor Company; General Motors LLC; Honda (American Honda Motor Co.); Hyundai Motor Company; Jaguar Cars LTD; KIA Motors Corporation; Land Rover; Mazda Motor Corp.; Mercedes-Benz USA LLC.; Mitsubishi Motors North America Inc.; Nissan North America Inc.; Porsche Cars North America Inc.; Saab Cars North America Inc.; Subaru of America Inc.; Suzuki Motor of America, Inc.; Tesla Motors, Inc; Toyota Motor Corporation; Volkswagen of America Inc.; and Volvo Cars of N.A. LLC.

Other potential defects that continue to be seen on the Watch List include structure issues in the 2005 and 2006 Toyota Sienna in 6<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> place. The 2011 and 2012 Chevy Cruze is in 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> place for potentially malfunctioning service brakes. Speed control complaints are again a standout for the Toyota Camry -- the 2007 Toyota Camry, the 2006 Camry, the 2010 Camry, and the 2005 Camry occupy the 5<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, and 15<sup>th</sup> places in the current Watch List.

Some manufacturers have initiated recalls that may be related to issues on the list, but death and injury claims continue to mount. These complaints may indicate that the recall repairs were improperly performed or that they did not resolve a potential defect, or the root cause has not been properly identified.

For example, Toyota initiated a safety recall in 2008 to replace the Liftgate struts in approximately 196,222 model year 2004-2006 Toyota Sienna vehicles equipped with power rear Liftgate struts. Toyota also issued a recall for certain Model Year 1998 through 2010 Sienna passenger vehicles manufactured between August 7, 1997 and January 4, 2010, due to the corrosion of the spare tire carrier when high concentrations of road salt reach the carrier.

In August 2103, General Motors recalled 293,000 2011MY and 2012MY Cruze vehicles for intermittent loss of the brake assist. Consumer complaints to NHTSA continue to mention brake failures even after the recall repair was performed.

Attorney Lance Cooper, whose work on behalf of the family of a woman who died in a crash caused by the switch failure brought the defect to light, says that the Watch List can prevent future tragedies.

“We are pleased that the Vehicle Safety Watch is serving its intended purpose. This data should be used to further investigate potential defects in order to save lives and reduce

injuries,” Cooper said.

The Quarterly Vehicle Safety Watch List is a product of the Institute’s Vehicle Safety Watch List Analytics and the NHTSA Enforcement Monitoring Program. Lance Cooper, of the Cooper Firm in Marietta, Ga., sponsors the program in memory of Brooke Melton, who died in a 2010 crash caused by the sudden failure of the ignition in her 2005 Chevy Cobalt. The Watch List is compiled using on peer-reviewed analytic methods, with support from Quality Control Systems Corp. These reports are intended to help the public recognize emerging problems in the U.S. fleet and to identify continuing failures potentially associated with known problems.

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**The Safety Institute** examines areas of injury prevention and product safety across a broad spectrum. The Institute bases its plans and priorities on issues that require greater study and emphasis, as well as those which may be underserved by other organizations and advocates. The Institute gives special attention to those areas of emerging importance to injury and product safety, including the effects of new and changing technologies.