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News Release

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GM Cobalt Tops The Safety Institute's Quarterly Vehicle Safety Watch List: Tracking Top 15 Potential Vehicle Defects

Today, The Safety Institute (TSI) releases the latest report from its quarterly Vehicle Safety Watch List (the "[Watch List](#)"). General Motors Chevrolet Cobalt takes four out of the top five slots for potential electrical issues affecting the 2010, 2005, 2008 and 2009 models. The list is based on early warning reporting claims made public by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

A review of consumer complaint data shows post-repair failures in two recalls. Potential electrical issues affecting the GM Cobalt include complaints to NHTSA from consumers reporting potential electrical failures such as stalling and failed steering after the vehicles have been repaired. (See links Cobalt [2010](#), [2009](#), [2008](#), [2006](#), and [2005](#)). Additionally, consumers continue to file complaints with NHTSA over electrical failures following recall repairs to ignition switches in the 2006 Saturn Ion and the 2006 Chevrolet HHR.

In April 2014, certain model 2005-2010 Chevrolet Cobalts were recalled due to a defective ignition switch that could affect the safe operation of airbag systems; additionally in the affected vehicles, the key could be removed from the ignition when the ignition was not in the "Off" position.

"It is important that consumers have the recall repairs done – and it's important to investigate and understand whether new problems are being introduced and if vehicles are repaired adequately" said Sean Kane, The Safety Institute founder and president of the board of directors.

The Watch List is sponsored by the Melton family in memory of their daughter Brooke, who died in a 2010 crash caused by a well-known ignition switch defect in her 2005 Chevy Cobalt. Brooke Melton, 29, died when she skidded into another vehicle after the ignition module of her 2005 Cobalt slipped into the accessory position. Documents and evidence developed in the Melton case found that GM knew about the ignition switch problem as early as 2001. Ken and Beth Melton, of Cobb County, Georgia, decided to provide ongoing support to the significant research and analysis that the Watch List provides, in hope of preventing future tragedies.

"This latest safety watch list shows that many of the original vehicles on the first list still rank high, making clear that these defective vehicles, which have already been linked to injuries and deaths, continue to endanger occupants – even after the recalls," the Meltons said. "We hope that this information will encourage NHTSA to investigate or the automakers to fix these problems before more lives are lost."

Brooke Melton's 2010 death was initially deemed the result of a loss-of-control crash on a rainy night. But the Melton's persistent pursuit of justice revealed GM's longstanding knowledge of a defective ignition module that could shift out of the run position while a vehicle is underway, turning off the airbags at the same time it is cutting off the engine power, anti-lock brakes and power steering. After GM reported the defect and launched a limited recall, the Meltons asked the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, in February 2014, to open an investigation into GM's actions.

That investigation eventually led to \$35 million in civil fines levied against GM, and nearly 15 million vehicles recalled. Congress held hearings on GM's deception and NHTSA's failures to probe the defect when it first learned about airbag deployment failures in 2007. The ignition switch defect is also at the center of a multi-district litigation (MDL).

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.

Newcomers to the list are the 2006 and 2007 Honda Accord for potential air bag issues, the 2005 and 2006 Chevrolet Malibu for potential steering issues and the 2006 Saturn Ion for potential electrical issues.

In addition, Toyota continues to occupy several spots for potential structure and vehicle speed control claims. Structure issues in the 2006 Toyota Sienna have been on the list for four out of the past five reports. None of these issues have been investigated by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) or effectively remedied by the manufacturer.

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 Quarterly Vehicle Safety Watch List, launched in 2014, 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., previously sponsored the program in memory of Brooke Melton. The Watch List is compiled using 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.