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## **News Release**

**Monday, March 16, 2016**

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### **GM Cobalt Continues to Top Safety Institute's Quarterly Vehicle Safety Watch List for Potential Electrical Issues**

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

Additionally, the 2011 Chevrolet HHR takes the 2<sup>nd</sup> place slot for potential electrical while the 2007 HHR and 2006 Saturn Ion are in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> spots. Consumers also continue to file complaints with NHTSA over electrical failures following recall repairs to ignition switches in the 2006 Saturn Ion and the 2007 Chevrolet HHR.

In April 2014, GM recalled certain 2005-2010 Chevrolet Cobalt, 2006-2011 Chevrolet HHR and 2003-2007 Saturn Ion vehicles due to a defective ignition switch that could affect the safe operation of airbag systems, and allowed the driver to remove the key from the ignition when the ignition was not in the "Off" position. The weight on the key ring and/or road conditions or some other jarring event could cause the ignition switch to move out of the run position, turning off the engine, the power brakes and steering and disable the airbags.

Newcomers to this Vehicle Safety Watch List are the 2007 Chevrolet HHR for potential electrical issues, the 2010 Toyota Prius for potential foundation brake issues and the 2008 Buick Enclave for potential structure issues.

In addition, Toyota continues to occupy spots for potential structure and vehicle speed control claims.

“The persistence of some of these defect issues in the EWR death and injury claims, as well as the consumer complaint data, raises questions about the system to identify safety issues and apply appropriate remedies. This is especially true of problems that may be associated with high-profile defects such as Toyota unintended acceleration and GM ignition switches,” said Sean Kane, The Safety Institute founder and president of the board of directors. “In the meantime, consumers are stuck with vehicles that may pose significant dangers to themselves, their passengers and other motorists.”

Some manufacturers have initiated recalls that may be related to issues on the list, but those recalls have not stopped the death and injury claims. 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.

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.

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).

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.