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News Release

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The Safety Institute Announces Quarterly Vehicle Safety Watch List of Top 15 Potential Vehicle Defects: Chevrolet Electrical Problems Dominate

Today, The Safety Institute is releasing the latest report from its quarterly Vehicle Safety Watch List. Electrical problems in Chevrolet vehicles, as documented by death and injury claims found in manufacturers' 2015 Early Warning Reports, top the Watch List. Other trending potential defects are speed control issues in the 2006 Camry and brake issues in the 2010 Toyota Prius.

Chevy vehicles – specifically the Cobalt, the HHR and the Malibu – were a standout for death and injury claims, occupying eight spots on the list – including the first six positions. With the exception of the 2006 Malibu, which claimed the fifth spot for steering issues, General Motors reported death and injury claims for the Cobalt in the 2006-2010 model years, and in 2006 and 2010 HHR vehicles related to electrical issues. The Chevrolet vehicle ranking highest on the Watch List based on death and injury claims is the 2006 Cobalt with alleged electrical component problems.

In 2014, GM recalled a total of 29 million vehicles in North America for an ignition switch defect, which could shut down the vehicle's engine, cutting off the power steering and braking systems and disabling the airbags.

The preponderance of death and injury claims related to electrical problems in GM vehicles is an area that warrants further investigation by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

The 2006 Toyota Camry won the list's tenth spot for speed control problems. Toyota has been reporting sufficient death and injury claims involving speed control problems in the 2006 Camry to claim a spot on every Watch List since October 2014. The 2006 Toyota

Camry has been the target of NHTSA investigations and recalls for speed control problems. Its continued presence on the Watch List suggests that the correct problem has not been identified or the recall remedy was ineffective.

Manufacturers are only required to report EWR claims involving the 10 previous model years, so no 2005 model year will appear on future Watch Lists; 2006 model year vehicles – including the 2006 Cobalt and the 2006 Toyota Camry will be next to drop off the Watch Lists. The absence of a model year does not necessarily reflect a decrease in death and injury claims, or problems reported elsewhere.

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 claims 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 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. 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.

The Melton family of Cobb County, Georgia sponsors the Vehicle Safety Watch List in memory of their daughter Brooke, who died in a 2010 crash caused by an 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, provide ongoing support to the significant research and analysis that the Watch List provides, in hopes of preventing future tragedies.

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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.