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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: Ford Explorer Carbon Monoxide Problems Hit Civilian Drivers

Today, The Safety Institute is releasing the latest report from its quarterly Vehicle Safety Watch List. For the fourth quarter in a row, powertrain problems in 2014 and 2015 Jeep Grand Cherokee vehicles claim the top two spots. But appearing on the Watch List for the first time in the number three and six spots are the 2016 and 2015 Ford Explorer for problems categorized in the data respectively as other/fuel system, apparently related to a defect that has received a lot of media attention lately: carbon monoxide or fumes in the occupant compartment.

Using publicly available data such as the consumer complaints in the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's 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 2014-2015 Jeep Grand Cherokee in the top two spots and the 2013 Chrysler 300 in the sixth spot appear to correlate with the April 2016 Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA) recall for vehicles equipped with a monostable gear selector. According to the Fiat's recall submissions, the new gear selector "may not adequately warn the driver when driver's door is opened and the vehicle is not in PARK, allowing them to exit the vehicle while the vehicle is still in gear." Fiat Chrysler blamed drivers for their mistaken belief that they had shifted the transmission into the Park position, but implemented a software update that would automatically shift the vehicle into Park upon the driver's exit. The complaints show that drivers are still reporting that even when the transmission indicates that it is in the Park position, it may actually be in another gear, or may auto-park while in motion:

Our 2015 Grand Cherokee was parked in a store parking lot, in park but running. The shift indicator showed it in park when my fiancée exited the Jeep she went into the store,

someone came in and indicated that the Jeep was going crazy. The Jeep had shifted itself into reverse, drove around the parking lot twice and finally crashed into a tree.

The contact stated that while the [2015 Grand Cherokee] as parked with the engine left running, the vehicle reversed independently into the garage without warning and caused the rear window to fracture.

Had Jeep recall performed for the auto park issue. Since the recall, the Jeep has tried to engage Autopark four times while in motion. The first time we were 30 miles from home, merging on to freeway. Jeep went in to neutral, display read 'vehicle speed too fast to shift into park'. Obviously not trying to shift into park as I merge in highway traffic! Stopped on side of road, vehicle would not shift into park. Set ebrake, had vehicle towed in. A few weeks later, transfer case internally exploded. June 19th wife was going through an intersection, vehicle went in to neutral again. This time display says ' Autopark disabled.' She coasted in to a parking lot, shut car off, started it and everything was ok. Four days ago, wife was backing out of driveway and jeep slammed in to park, on its own. She tried pulling forward and it slammed into park again.

The contact owns a 2015 Jeep Grand Cherokee. While approaching a stop sign, the auto parking gauge indicator illuminated and the vehicle shifted into the park position. The failure recurred three additional times. The vehicle was serviced per NHTSA campaign Number: 16v240000 (power train), but the remedy failed to repair the vehicle. The vehicle was towed to the dealer, but they were unable to duplicate the failure. The tow truck driver witnessed the failure.

Ford Explorers from the 2016 and 2015 model years, in the third spot for “Other” and the sixth spot for fuel system, respectively, have been subject of a NHTSA investigation since July 2016 for carbon monoxide seeping into the SUV's cabin. Last July, the agency bumped up the probe to an Engineering Analysis, with 2,842 complaints to Ford and NHTSA. The issue has been the subject of news stories, as some of the victims were police departments, which use the Interceptor, a law enforcement version of the Explorer. Departments reported that at least five officers lost consciousness, were hospitalized for CO exposure or crashed their vehicles.

The 2016 Toyota Tundra with structure problems was ranked fifth. The automaker recalled these vehicles in January for reinforcement brackets at the outboard corners of the rear step bumper that apparently can be easily damaged, causing the bumper to break off. Drivers have complained to the agency that the repair was not available months after the recall. Others reported that they sustained injuries when they stepped on the bumper and it broke off.

The 2014 and 2015 Mazda6 are newcomers to the Watch List, in the eighth and ninth spots for structural problems. No investigations or recalls, and few complaints to NHTSA. But a few have complained that the windshield had developed a long crack.

The 2007 Chevrolet Impala vehicles occupied the fourth position. The 2006-2014 Impala was among the vehicles swept up in the 2014 GM ignition defect recall. The most recent complaints to NHTSA involved electrical problems, particularly, related to sudden stalls or severely-reduced-power-while-underway scenarios. GM has not recall any vehicles for this problem. However in April 2015, GM sent a notice its customers stating that “the 2009-2011 model year Chevrolet Impala vehicles may

have a broken solder connection within the accelerator pedal position (APP) sensor. This condition may result in reduced engine power and loss of traction control assist. GM offered “Special Coverage” in the form of a free repair. The presence of the 2007 Impala indicates that vehicles outside of these model years may have the same problem.

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 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 is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit that 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.

Rank	Fleet / Stratified Component
1	JEEP GRAND CHEROKEE 4X4 2015 Power Train
2	JEEP GRAND CHEROKEE 4X4 2014 Power Train
3	FORD EXPLORER 2016 Other
4	CHEVROLET IMPALA 2007 Electrical
5	TOYOTA TUNDRA 2016 Structure
6	FORD EXPLORER 2015 Fuel System
7	CHRYSLER 300 2012 Power Train
8	MAZDA MAZDA6 2014 Structure
9	MAZDA MAZDA6 2015 Structure
10	CHRYSLER 300 2013 Power Train
11	CHEVROLET IMPALA 2008 Electrical
12	FORD F-150 2016 Visibility
13	NISSAN ALTIMA 2013 Latch
14	GMC ACADIA 2012 Structure
15	MERCEDES BENZ GL 2007 Fire Related