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## News Release

July 17, 2018

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

Today, The Safety Institute is releasing the latest report from its quarterly Vehicle Safety Watch List. Once again, the 2016 Toyota Tundra with structure problems rose to the top, Ford Explorer owners still reporting carbon monoxide seeping into the occupant compartments and Honda Odyssey seats that fold over and fail to lock in place. Brake problems in the 2016 Toyota Corolla is a newcomer to the list.

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 Tundra structure problems correlate to a January Toyota recall for 72,847 light trucks in the 2016 and 2017 model years, to replace 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 last two injury claims through the fourth quarter of 2017 referred to incidents in November 2017. However, the most recent consumer complaint to NHTSA was in September of 2017, so this problem may be receding.

The Ford Explorer carbon monoxide problem dropped down to four spots on the list. The 2015 Ford Explorer is in second place; the 2014 Explorer is in third place; the 2013 Explorer in eighth place; and the 2017 model year in the seventh spot – all in the “engine and engine cooling” categories. The complaints to NHTSA still indicate that the Explorers' continued strong showing this quarter is related to carbon monoxide escaping into the SUV's cabin. Last July, the agency bumped up a probe

into this defect to an Engineering Analysis, with 2,842 complaints to Ford and NHTSA. The investigation now covers 2011-2017 Explorers. 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 Engineering Analysis remains open. Recent complaints to NHTSA in March contained narratives like this:

Within the first, original, 2000 miles of driving my new 2015 Ford Explorer, my family and I have been subjected to an odor that is similar to melting plastic, burning hair or engine exhaust fumes in row passenger cabin while driving. This is especially noticeable after high rpm acceleration or during highway driving. In relation to this smell are symptoms of headache, tiredness, and or nausea. I have brought vehicle to multiple Ford dealerships, the last time the dealership had the car for over 4 weeks! We have been told that necessary repairs have been made. But the vehicle and my family are still experiencing the same problems. Vehicle now has just over 23000 miles on it. Since buying this vehicle I have had a number [of] emergency room visits that were not conclusive and after reading findings by this agency and others now believe that there is a connection to my Ford Explorer, and we are suffering from prolonged carbon monoxide poisoning.

Second row seating problems in the Honda Odyssey showed up for the third consecutive quarter, with three model years claiming a spot on the Safety Watch List. This quarter, the 2015, the 2016 and 2012 model years occupied the fifth, sixth and 10<sup>th</sup> spots respectively. Honda has twice recalled the minivans, in December 2016 and December 2017. The most recent recall involved 806,936 2011-2016 minivans with second seating that failed to latch in place or could tip over. Most of the recent complaints criticize Honda for its failure to implement a timely remedy.

The 2014 Jeep Grand Cherokee are now in fourth position, with the 2015 model year in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> spots, respectively. In 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 most recent complaints continue to suggest that Jeep Grand Cherokee vehicles are suffering from other transmission problems related to stalls at high speed and unintended acceleration. Whether FCA software patch to fix the monostable gear shifter issue has caused other problems is a question that may be worth investigating.

Rank 12<sup>th</sup> are 2016 Toyota Corollas with foundation brakes problems. There are no recalls or investigations associated with this problem, but in recent VOQs, drivers report that their brakes were slow to respond, or did not respond at all. According to some reports, this has resulted in crashes. Toyota's EWR reports for calendar year 2017 show claims involving 23 injuries associated with foundation brake problems.

It wouldn't be a Safety Watch List without speed control problems in a Toyota. This quarter, the honor is claimed by the 2014 Camry, ranked last. The complaints are recent, and some of the

narratives within the VOQs tell a very old story about Toyota's skill in programming automotive throttle control software:

I was parking my 2014 Toyota Camry in a parking lot at my place of employment. I had my foot on the brake and the car was barely moving when suddenly it accelerated over a curb and into a retaining wall!

Other drivers complained of hesitation when accelerating.

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