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Ford expands Takata driver-side air bag recall in U.S.

Thu, Dec 18 2014

DETROIT (Reuters) - Ford Motor Co on Thursday expanded the recall of older-model Mustang cars that have driver-side Takata air bags with inflators, to include about 502,500 vehicles.

Ford was one of five automakers asked by U.S. regulator National Highway Traffic Safety Administration last month to expand a recall of vehicles with possibly defective driver-side Takata Corp air bags beyond a limited area with high humidity.

Takata has said that extended exposure to high humidity could cause the inflators to malfunction, causing metal shrapnel to be launched at vehicle occupants when these air bags inflate.

Honda Motor Co and Mazda Motor Corp have also expanded their driver-side air bag recalls to nationwide in the United States, leaving only BMW AG and Chrysler, a part of Fiat Chrysler Automobiles that have not expanded their actions.

Previously, Ford had recalled about 55,000 vehicles with possibly defective driver-side air bags. NHTSA requested the expanded recall after it learned of air bag inflator problems outside of the limited high-humidity areas.

Driver-side air bag inflator incidents have been linked to at least five deaths, none in Ford vehicles. Ford said it was aware of one accident with an injury possibly related to malfunctioning air bags.

Now, the Ford recall includes 500,439 Mustangs from model years 2005 to 2008 and 2,050 of the niche two-seat sports car Ford GT from model years 2005 and 2006.

Of the vehicles to be recalled at the request of NHTSA, about 463,000 are registered in the United States and federalized territories, about 27,500 in Canada, about 7,600 in Mexico and about 4,500 outside North America.

Including passenger-side air bag recalls, the total number of Ford vehicles recalled with Takata air bag inflators is now 538,977.

(Reporting by [Bernie Woodall](#); Editing by [Bernadette Baum](#) and [Chris Reese](#))



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Automotive News

Takata CEO takes out newspaper ads in reaction to airbag crisis

Craig Trudell and Masatsugu Horie

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TOKYO (Bloomberg) -- Takata Corp., the embattled airbag maker, stepped up its response to a global auto-safety crisis by distributing an open letter from its chief executive officer in U.S. and German newspapers.

Shigehisa Takada, Takata's chairman and grandson of the company founder, wrote in the letter that the parts maker is tripling capacity to test its airbag inflators. The devices have ruptured in five fatal accidents and have led to recalls of more than 20 million vehicles.

"Even one failure is unacceptable and we are truly and deeply saddened that five fatalities have been attributed to auto accidents where Takata air bags malfunctioned," Takada, 48, wrote. "We understand the public's concerns and we take them seriously."

The advertisements in newspapers including the *New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *Detroit Free Press* show Takata is intensifying efforts to defend itself amid a crisis that's sent its shares plunging 56 percent this year. Takata hired public-relations firm Sard Verbinen & Co. this month and said Alby Berman, vice president of global communications, is retiring while still consulting for the Tokyo-based company.

The open letter follows Takada's interview Wednesday with Japan's *Nikkei* newspaper, in which he said Takata had been misunderstood and had no intention of confronting the U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The company has refused NHTSA's demands to expand some recalls nationwide that have been limited to high-humidity regions. The regulator said this week that it's preparing for a legal battle.

Replacement efforts

Takata has said it will increase replacement airbag production to 450,000 repair kits by next month from its plant in Mexico. The company also will boost capacity to build the components at factories in China and Germany within a year, Takada told the *Nikkei*.

Toyota Motor Corp., Honda Motor Co. and other carmakers met last week to discuss hiring an independent engineering firm to test Takata inflators.

Honda, Takata's biggest customer, also has said it's agreed to source some replacement parts from Autoliv Inc. and Daicel Corp.



**An Open Letter From
Takata Corporation**