



NADA Used Car Guide

**STAND BY YOUR APPRAISAL**  
with the NADA Appraisal Suite  
Prices start at \$99/mo.

Order now

# Automotive News

## Airbag-safety vet leads hunt for Takata clues

Ryan Beene  

Automotive News | March 2, 2015 - 12:01 am EST

WASHINGTON -- The former federal auto safety regulator chosen to coordinate automakers' investigation into Takata airbag explosions is no stranger to the issue of airbags endangering lives they're designed to save.

David Kelly joined the National Safety Council in 1996 to work on the public advocacy campaign to reduce the number of kids and small adults killed by passenger-side airbags.

"It's what brought me to D.C. in the first place -- making sure airbags are used properly and operate properly," said Kelly, 46, former acting head of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration under President George W. Bush. "Airbags are great devices that have saved thousands and thousands of lives, so I have a very deep, personal vested interest in the issue."

Kelly was hired last week to coordinate the work of 10 automakers that are jointly seeking the root cause of Takata's airbag inflator ruptures, which have been linked to six deaths and prompted the recalls of some 17 million vehicles in the U.S. since 2008. Kelly also will work with Orbital ATK, the defense contractor and rocket-propulsion experts hired by the consortium to test and analyze inflators retrieved from recalled vehicles.

"Orbital was selected because of their expertise with propellants," Kelly said.

Takata has used ammonium nitrate as the principal propellant in its airbag inflators since 1999. It's the only major airbag supplier to use the compound.

Kelly joined the U.S. Transportation Department in 2003 and later became chief of staff to then-NHTSA Administrator Nicole Nason. He served as acting administrator from August 2008 to January 2009.

Kelly now heads Storm King Strategies, a consultancy that does lobbying and advocacy work mainly on transportation safety issues. There, Kelly says, he has worked with a diverse clientele that includes automakers, safety advocates and supplier groups.

That background will help him as he works to coordinate the efforts of 10 automakers that normally are fierce competitors.

"I think that when you put together a group like this, and they are so narrowly focused on the objective, and that's getting to the root cause of the airbag deployment issue, it's easy to stay on task," he said.

PRINTED FROM: <http://www.autonews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20150302/OEM11/303029947&template=printart>

---

Entire contents © 2015 [Crain Communications, Inc.](#)

---