

Recall completion rates declining, Autotrader surveys show



Autotrader

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Following what's shaping up to be the largest industrywide recall in U.S. automotive history, automakers might have to convince recall-fatigued consumers to bring affected vehicles in for repairs.

Consumer website Autotrader, in ongoing study results, found that the U.S. recall completion rate in 2014 dropped to 48 percent from 56 percent in 2013, Autotrader spokeswoman Nicole Twork said in an e-mail.

Troubled airbag supplier Takata Corp. and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration made history Tuesday when they reached an agreement that could result in the recall of 34 million vehicles produced by 11 automakers.

All told, more than 50 million vehicles with Takata airbags have been recalled globally since 2008, according to Reuters estimates. Honda Motor Co. has had the greatest exposure to the defective airbags, which can shoot shrapnel in a vehicle cabin. So far, at least six deaths have been reported -- all of them in Hondas.

Honda's most recent Takata recall, before this week's announcement, came on May 14 and it included 4.89 million vehicles globally.

Dealer reactions

A Honda dealership service manager in Wisconsin said people come in "when there's a lot of hype" as with the recent Takata-related recalls, but there's a lag between the initial visit and the repair.

"They come in and we look at the car and order parts, and then when the hype goes away they take longer to come in and get the repair," said Eric Moore, service manager at Bergstrom Honda in Oshkosh, Wis.

Toyota added 5 million Corolla, Yaris and other models to its Takata airbag-related recall campaign on May 13, and a Toyota dealership service manager in Florida said he has no problem getting consumers to come in for a recall fix.

“We don’t have people avoiding or saying ‘we don’t want to do this,’” said Emil Pellino, service manager at Toyota of Orlando. “For big recalls we get people calling in and asking, but for the most part we screen every car that comes in and we scan for fixes then.”

The recall screening at Pellino’s dealership is not uncommon. Most dealerships will run a check on a vehicle every time it goes through the service department.

When vehicles are still under warranty, it’s not as hard to get owners to come in to the dealership for recall repairs, Michelle Krebs, an analyst at Autotrader, said in an interview. But most of the vehicles that could be affected by the faulty Takata airbags, which were installed between 2002 and 2008, likely aren’t under warranty.

“As soon as the warranty is up, people don’t go to the dealer as much anymore -- they go to independent mechanics,” Krebs said. “Those places are hit or miss for recall screening, and people worry ‘if I bring it in for [a recall] they’ll find something else and it will cost me more money.’”

Varying results

Recall completion rates can vary by study and by the types of recalls.

A 2012 study from the Society of Automotive Engineers and NHTSA found a much larger portion of consumers were bringing their recalled vehicles in for fixes between 2006 and 2010. In the study, an average of 77 percent of recalled light trucks, multi-passenger and passenger vehicles were repaired during the study period.

At that time, airbag-related recalls had the highest rate of completion, at 78.9 percent.

In 2011, a Government Accountability Office study revealed that after an 18-month period, the completion rate for recall fixes was only 65 percent.

Krebs said the recent influx in vehicle recalls has a lot to do with the declining recall completion rate.

“There have been so many recalls recently, people are just tired of hearing about them.”