

# GM fund: 114 deaths linked to faulty ignition switches

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*Washington* — General Motors' ignition switch compensation fund said Monday it approved three new death claims last week, hiking the total to 114.

The fund run by lawyer Ken Feinberg said it has also approved nine new injury claims, bringing the total number of approved claims for injuries to 229. Of that total, 13 are for serious injuries and 216 are for less severe injuries

The fund is nearly at the end of its year-old review of ignition deaths and injuries. Just 109 of the 4,342 claims submitted — or 2.5 percent — are still under review. Another 35 claims could be reviewed if documents are submitted. At the current pace, the fund hopes to complete its work by the end of July.

GM is paying at least \$1 million in each death claim and has set aside \$550 million to pay claims.

The fund's deputy administrator, Camile Biros, said Monday that the fund has made 245 compensation offers and more than 70 percent have been accepted: to date, 179 have been accepted and six were rejected. The rest are still awaiting decisions.

Monday's announcement means more than 100 new deaths have been linked to the problem than GM initially acknowledged.

GM initially said last year that 13 deaths were related to Chevrolet Cobalts, Saturn Ions and other cars with ignition switches that can inadvertently shut off the engine and disable power steering and air bags. GM delayed recalling the cars for nearly a decade even after some within the company became aware there was a problem.

GM stopped updating its own count of deaths or injuries related to the issue last year.

The U.S. Justice Department is nearing a decision on whether to charge GM criminally in connection with the delay — and could seek to require a guilty plea or offer a "deferred prosecution" agreement — along with a fine expected to top \$1.2 billion.

The U.S. Attorney's Office in Manhattan is being aided by a federal grand jury, the FBI, 50 state attorneys general, the Securities and Exchange Commission and Transport Canada in an investigation of GM's delayed recall, which led to the firings of 15 GM employees last year.

In total, 4,342 claims were submitted by the Jan. 31 deadline, including 474 death claims. A total of 109 claims are still under review, including 19 death claims. A total of 2,640 claims have been ruled ineligible, including 284 deaths.

Neither GM nor the fund have disclosed any concrete details about who has been approved for compensation or demographic characteristics of those approved.

The first trial stemming from the dozens of suits filed against GM and consolidated in front of a federal judge in New York is set to start in January. Lawyers are deposing dozens of current and former GM executives, including GM CEO Mary Barra set for October and former CEO Rick Wagoner in September.

It's not clear if federal prosecutors will seek to charge individual GM employees.

Some Wall Street analysts have speculated GM may have to pay a fine to resolve the investigations that could top \$2 billion. GM in May 2014 paid a \$35 million fine to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to resolve its investigation and agreed to up to three years of intense monitoring. Last month, NHTSA said it was extending the monitoring until at least May 2016.

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