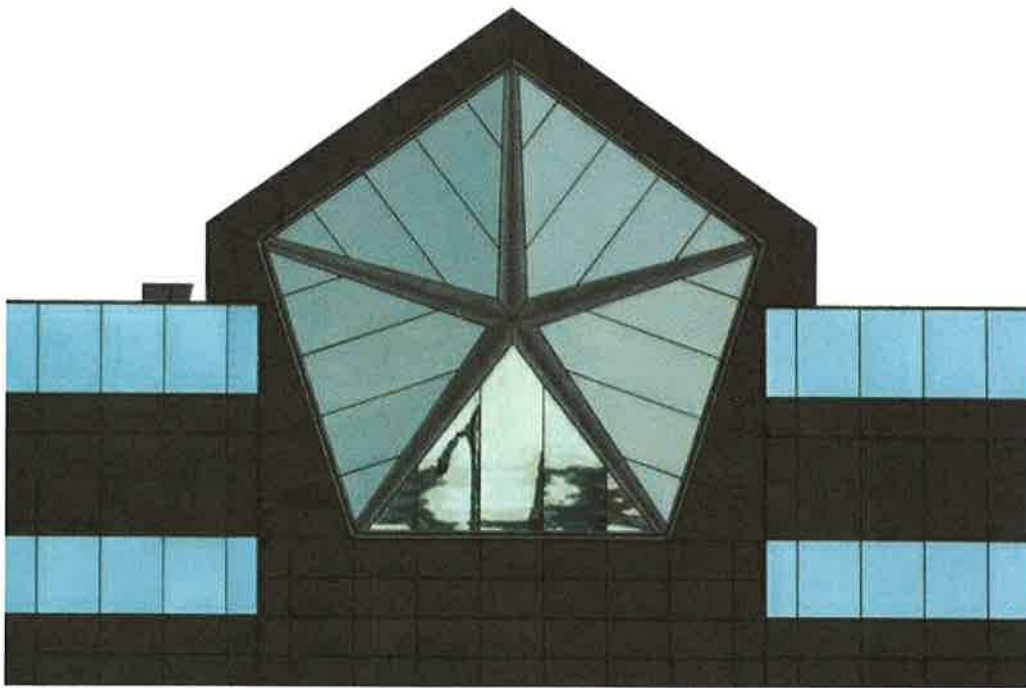


# NHTSA: Fiat Chrysler did not act fast enough on recalls



By Alisa Priddle, Detroit Free Press 4:20 p.m. EDT June 18, 2015

*Number of recalls under review at July 2 public hearing grows to 22 as NHTSA feels Fiat Chrysler has not met all its deadlines.*



The familiar Pentastar as seen at the top of the headquarters of Fiat Chrysler Automobiles U.S. headquarters in Auburn Hills,. (Photo: Eric Seals)

Fiat Chrysler Automobiles did not address safety issues in a timely manner, the National Traffic Highway Safety Administration says in a new document on the government website.

"NHTSA has tentatively concluded that Fiat Chrysler has not remedied vehicles in a reasonable time and has not adequately remedied vehicles," according to the document released as a Supplemental Notice in advance of a public hearing scheduled for July 2.

The hearing is to determine whether the Auburn Hills-based automaker met its obligations to notify vehicle owners of safety issues, kept NHTSA properly updated and fixed vehicles in a timely manner.

The document also shows that the hearing will center on 22 safety campaigns, up from 20 recalls being scrutinized when the hearing was first put on the calendar last month. The 22 recalls under scrutiny cover about 11 million vehicles since 2013 for a variety of problems affecting ignition switches, air bags, door latches, axles, fuel tanks and other issues, some of which affect the ability to steer, brake and control the vehicle.

NHTSA has been critical of the auto industry, which has had a series of high-profile recalls. General Motors is under criminal investigation for not acting on a deadly ignition switch for more than a decade; Toyota was fined a record \$1.2 billion for misleading customers about unintended acceleration complaints, and almost 34 million vehicles from 11 automakers are being recalled for having air bags made by Japanese supplier Takata that can rupture and spew metal shards.

NHTSA and FCA have been on a collision course over safety compliance for some time.

The safety agency previously sent FCA 12 pages of questions and demanded a response by June 1. The automaker replied with more than 5 million pages of documents and the suggestion that was sufficient to call off the public hearing because of its prudent handling of safety matters.

"The initiatives described in our response to NHTSA's Special Order reflect a deep commitment to thorough investigation and the timely remedy of safety defects," said FCA spokesman Eric Mayne. "While this commitment has helped FCA US LLC achieve positive results, we will not be satisfied until we firmly re-establish the trust our customers place in us."

The Auburn Hills automaker said it has already taken a number of actions including a senior management review and monthly report on all recall actions; emphasis on timely reaction to problems with investigators following up on complaints; a review of the recall process, and the creation of an executive review team with representatives from many departments to meet biweekly.

But FCA also admitted that in some instances, owners were not notified within the 60-day deadline. In one case, the deadline was missed by only two days, but in an air bag recall the notice was more than five months late. The report says there are two recalls in which owners have yet to be notified.

The safety agency also feels FCA has not provided information and updates on its recalls as required.

The hearing is set for 10 a.m. July 2 in Washington. Witnesses will be called but cannot be cross-examined.

"Based on information presented at the public hearing and other available information, NHTSA may issue an order that could include a finding that Fiat Chrysler failed to carry out its recall requirements under the Safety Act and requiring Fiat Chrysler to take specific actions to comply with the law," the document concludes.

If FCA has violated safety regulations, it could face more than \$700 million in fines. The automaker could also be ordered to replace or buy back vehicles.

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