

Takata says 5.1 million more vehicles in U.S. have defective airbag inflators



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WASHINGTON (Reuters) -- Takata Corp. declared another 5.1 million U.S. vehicles defective as the company disclosed an 11th death could be linked to a faulty airbag, U.S. auto safety regulators said Tuesday.

Most of the vehicles covered in numerous previous recalls involving Takata airbags have been older models, but the new recalls include at least one 2014 model. The Japanese company said newer vehicles remain under "investigation and could be subject to recall at a later date."

The newly released documents show that regulators may prod automakers to recall recent models.

That could greatly increase the total number of vehicles recalled, which in the United States now stands at about 24 million vehicles involving about 28 million Takata airbag inflators.

Ford Motor Co. on Tuesday became the first of several automakers to announce a recall. A 2006 Ford Ranger was involved in a Dec. 22 crash that killed the driver when a Takata airbag inflator caused the bag to rupture, sending shrapnel into the vehicle.

A similar airbag inflator was involved in a fatal rupture of a Honda model in Malaysia in 2014, which prompted a worldwide recall by Honda Motor Co.

Takata said in a document released on Tuesday that there was another rupture of a similar inflator in August in India in a 2007 Honda Civic, but it is not clear if the rupture caused the death of the driver. That could be the 11th death worldwide attributed to defective Takata inflators.

Nine deaths related to Takata airbags have occurred in the United States. The death in the Ford Ranger is the first not to involve a car made by Honda.

U.S. regulators from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration said on Friday that the expanded recall was imminent.

The automakers involved in the new Takata inflator recalls include Honda, BMW AG, Volkswagen AG's Volkswagen and Audi brands, Toyota Motor Corp., Daimler AG's Mercedes-Benz and Sprinter van brands, Mazda Motor Corp., and Saab AB.

The Ford recall announced on Tuesday includes 391,354 2004-06 Ford Rangers built in North America with driver-side airbags.

The Rangers recalled were previously recalled for potentially defective passenger-side airbag inflators, Ford said.

Honda has previously recalled about 6.28 million vehicles in the United States for airbag inflators, a Honda spokesman said. Honda worldwide has recalled vehicles with 23 million Takata airbag inflators since 2008 -- excluding the latest recall.