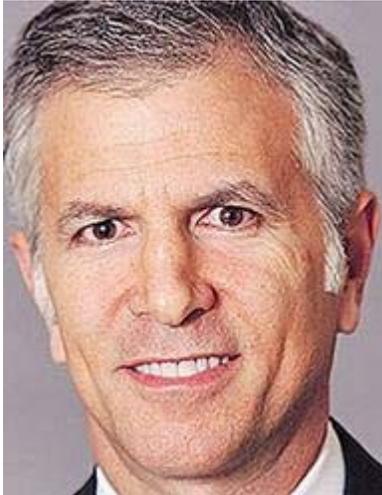


Mercedes helps dealers weather Takata recalls

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Schnitzer: "The right elements"

Mercedes-Benz USA will pay dealers as much as \$1,775 each month for used vehicles with recalled Takata airbags that are stuck in inventory under a stop-sale order.

Mercedes agreed this month to a recall assistance plan to help dealers cover expenses. In February, parent company Daimler AG recalled nearly 706,000 Mercedes-Benz passenger vehicles and 136,000 Daimler vans in the U.S.

The plan "has all the right elements in it," said Ken Schnitzer, chairman of the Mercedes-Benz Dealer Board and owner of four Mercedes-Benz dealerships in Texas. "So far, it's been a very manageable situation."

The monthly payment formula includes depreciation allowance, floorplan expense and a storage-and-wear fee, Schnitzer said.

The payment will range from \$325 for a C class up to \$1,775 for an SLS class. Payments on other nameplates include \$525 for the E class and \$650 for the GL. The payments are retroactive to Feb. 29. The recall covers various nameplates from the 2005 through 2014 model years.

<http://www.autonews.com/article/20160425/RETAIL07/304259979/mercedes-helps-dealers-weather-takata-recalls>

Specified payments are for 2010 or newer models. Mercedes told dealers it could adjust the amounts on older vehicles.

Dealers also will get additional loaner vehicle allocations to help handle recall-related service traffic.

Stores that show a need will be able to put up to five additional vehicles in their loaner fleet and receive the regular daily allowance for loaners. Those vehicles must stay in the fleet for at least three months but after that must come out once customers get their repaired vehicles. The additional loaner allocations end Jan. 3.

Mercedes also is offering a special sales incentive to customers who want to trade out of their recall-affected vehicle and buy or lease a new Mercedes-Benz. Owners of 2014 and 2013 models can get \$2,000 toward a new vehicle; owners of older vehicles can get \$1,000.

Mercedes-Benz aims to provide "dealers with the tools they need to inform and educate their customers with respect to this unprecedented challenge," a company spokeswoman wrote in an email. "Our top priority is the safety and peace of mind of our customers."

For dealers with multiple stores, no assistance will be paid if an affected vehicle is traded in at a non-Mercedes dealership and moved into inventory at a Mercedes store within the group. That received grumbling from one multibrand dealer, who didn't want to be named.

Schnitzer said the dealer board will continue to review the recall plan with Mercedes, including the issue of moving trade-in vehicles.

"If the other major industry players allow that ... we'll want to revisit that," he said.