



Vehicle

Defects and Recalls

Making
Canada's Roads
the Safest
in the World

ROAD SAFETY
VISION 2010



Transport
Canada

Transports
Canada

Canada

Transport Canada is responsible for enforcing the *Motor Vehicle Safety Act*. The Act covers all original safety-related equipment supplied with a vehicle by the manufacturer. The Act also covers tires and child restraints.

You can help us by reporting any problems with your vehicle, tires or child restraints that might create an unsafe condition. We check into **all** safety-related complaints. If we find an obvious fault or similar problems in a group of vehicles or regulated equipment, we will launch an investigation. Various mechanisms are available to Transport Canada in resolving these situations, including legal action if necessary.

The purpose of this publication is to answer some of the most commonly asked questions about vehicle defects and about the responsibility of Transport Canada, the manufacturer and the consumer.

Our mandate:

To reduce the risk of death, injury, and damage to property and the environment caused by the use of cars, trucks, buses, snowmobiles, motorcycles, tires and child restraints.



What is a Safety-Related Defect?

A safety-related defect is generally one that is common to a group of vehicles, tires or child restraints of the same design or manufacturer. These defects are likely to affect the safe operation of a vehicle, tire or child restraint without providing any prior warning to the vehicle operator or user. Therefore, the defect poses a risk to the vehicle operator, occupants and others.

Examples of safety-related defects:

- ▼ Steering components that may break suddenly, causing loss of vehicle control.
- ▼ Problems with fuel system components that may cause fuel leaks and possibly vehicle fires.
- ▼ Improperly designed or constructed tires that may blow out unexpectedly.
- ▼ Accelerator controls that may break or stick.
- ▼ Wheels that may crack or break, resulting in loss of vehicle control.
- ▼ Windshield wiper arms that may fall off while in operation.
- ▼ Seats and/or seat backs that fail unexpectedly during normal use.
- ▼ Critical vehicle components that may break, fall apart, or separate from the vehicle, causing loss of vehicle control, or injury to people inside or outside the vehicle.
- ▼ Wiring problems that may lead to a fire or loss of lighting.
- ▼ Air bags that deploy when they shouldn't.
- ▼ Child restraints with defective harness systems, buckles or components.

Examples of non-safety-related problems:

- ▼ **Ordinary wear of equipment** that has to be inspected, maintained and replaced periodically by the consumer. Such equipment includes shock absorbers, batteries, brake pads and shoes, and exhaust systems.
- ▼ Air conditioners and radios that do not operate properly.
- ▼ Non-structural or body panel rust.
- ▼ Poor quality of paint or cosmetic blemishes.

Reporting Safety-Related Problems to Transport Canada

For best results, phone us at **1-800-333-0510**, (or **(613) 993-9851** if you are calling from the Ottawa region) and ask to speak to a defect investigator. Calling directly is preferred instead of posted mail or email as it enables our investigators to confirm that your information is correct, and to answer your questions accurately.

What should you include in your report?

When reporting a vehicle problem that may relate to safety, provide the following information:

- ▼ Vehicle make, model and year.
- ▼ Owner's name, address and daytime phone number.
- ▼ The Vehicle Identification Number "VIN" (serial number). On most cars and trucks, this can be found on the driver side dashboard. You can read the VIN plate if you stand outside your vehicle and look through the windshield.
- ▼ A summary of the incident. Include weather conditions, speed, and type of highway.

This information is entered into our complaint data bank. A copy is forwarded to the manufacturer.

What happens to your complaint?

Information provided by consumers is entered into the computer data bank and catalogued according to make, model, year, manufacturer, and the affected part, assembly or system. Technical staff conduct a continuous analysis of complaints and trends to determine whether an unusual number of complaints of potential safety-related problems have been received on any specific line of vehicles, tires or child restraints. The seriousness and number of complaints are reviewed by technical staff and assessed against the number of vehicles (or items of equipment) manufactured for evidence of a trend.



How many complaints must be received before Transport Canada will look into the situation?

There is no set number. Every call or letter reporting an alleged safety problem is reviewed by an experienced investigator. In particular, Transport Canada reviews each report that suggests a potential safety defect involving groups of motor vehicles or vehicle equipment.

Recalls

Manufacturer's responsibility

The *Motor Vehicle Safety Act* requires that vehicle, tire and child restraint manufacturers or importers notify Transport Canada, dealers and the owners of their products about any safety problems.

Owner's responsibility

Manufacturers require your co-operation to resolve any safety issue. If your vehicle, tire or child restraint is recalled, make sure you follow the manufacturer's instructions. Many owners who receive a recall notice forget about it, or simply ignore it. This inaction could have serious safety consequences.

If you change your address or buy a used vehicle, inform the manufacturer in writing as soon as possible. For the manufacturer to notify you of a safety problem, you must provide your name and address, and the vehicle's make, model, year and VIN. On cars and trucks, you will find the number on the left side of the dashboard, near the windshield. It also appears on your vehicle registration certificate in the space marked "VIN".

If you have questions about a recall campaign, please contact your dealer.

It is important to become familiar with the **Owner's Manual** provided with each new vehicle or child restraint. It contains valuable information on the operation of the vehicle, schedules for inspections and lubrication, hints on vehicle handling, and installation of child restraints.

Note: Each province has requirements regarding safety checks, whether they are regulated periodic vehicle inspections, or are simply a requirement when selling or purchasing a used vehicle. Please contact your provincial Ministry of Transportation for any questions or concerns related to safety checks.

How to Reach Us

For more information on other road safety programs and initiatives, call Transport Canada's Information Centre at **1-800-333-0371**, or call **(613) 998-8616** if you are in the Ottawa area. You can email comments or questions to **roadsafetywebmail@tc.gc.ca** or write us at:

Road Safety and Motor Vehicle
Regulation Directorate
Transport Canada
Tower C, Place de Ville,
330 Sparks Street
Ottawa, Ontario,
K1A 0N5



You may also visit our web site at **www.tc.gc.ca/roadsafety** to search for recalls affecting your vehicle, tires or child restraint.

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