



U.S. Department  
of Transportation  
**National Highway  
Traffic Safety  
Administration**

400 Seventh Street, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20590

**JUN - 1 2006**

[Redacted]

NVS-216 aaj  
Ref No.: 10157387

Fresh Meadows, NY [Redacted]

Dear [Redacted]

As discussed in our telephone conversation, enclosed is a copy of your report that you submitted to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) Vehicle Safety Hotline. We apologize for the error in addressing your report.

NHTSA is the Federal agency responsible for improving safety on our Nation's highways. We are authorized to order manufacturers to recall and repair vehicles or items of motor vehicle equipment when our investigations indicate that they contain serious safety defects in their design, construction, or performance. We also monitor the adequacy of manufacturers' recall campaigns. In order for the agency to initiate an investigation, we look carefully at the body of consumer complaints and other available data to determine whether a defect may exist. We cannot act on isolated problems or resolve disputes between individual owners, dealers, or manufacturers.

We have reviewed our database in an effort to identify whether a safety defect trend exists with regard to air bag system not deploying during a crash that involved the 2000 BMW 323I vehicles. At this time, there is insufficient evidence to warrant opening a safety defect investigation. The information you provided has been entered into our database. It will be considered with other reports to identify any safety defect trends that may require our attention.

Additionally, each manufacturer designs its vehicles so the air bags will deploy if the severity of a crash exceeds a certain threshold. However, there is no Federal requirement establishing a particular threshold. Most manufacturers design their air bags to deploy when the crash severity is in the range of an 8 to 14 mph crash into a fixed solid barrier. This severity is about the same as a crash into another vehicle of equivalent weight at 16 to 28 mph. In lower speed crashes, where the air bag does not deploy, occupant protection is provided by the design of the interior surfaces in the vehicle, as well as by the safety belts provided at each seating position.

A number of factors, other than crash severity, can affect whether an air bag will deploy in a given crash; e.g., the angle of impact, the speed of the other vehicle, and the amount of force absorbed by the other vehicle or object that is impacted. Only an expert in crash reconstruction can provide an educated opinion as to whether the air bag in a vehicle should have deployed in a specific crash.

Sincerely,

Alberto A. Jimenez, Chief  
Correspondence Research Division  
Office of Defects Investigation  
Enforcement

Enclosure



DOT AUTO SAFETY HOTLINE  
888-DASH-2-DOT  
888-327-4236