



U.S. Department of Transportation

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

July 17, 2014

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

NVS-216 nam
Ref. No. 10587865

Dear Senator Boxer:

Thank you for your correspondence on behalf of your constituent, [REDACTED] concerning her daughter's model year (MY) 1995 Buick Regal. Your letter was forwarded to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). I am pleased to respond.

NHTSA is the Federal agency responsible for improving safety on our Nation's highways. We are authorized to order manufacturers to recall and repair motor vehicles or motor vehicle equipment when our investigations indicate that they contain 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 trend may exist. We do not have authority to act on isolated problems or resolve disputes between individual owners, dealers, or manufacturers.

[REDACTED] indicates that her daughter's MY 1995 Buick Regal frequently stalls, due to a problem with the ignition switch causing loss of power steering while driving. A local dealer provided an estimate to repair the ignition switch and lock cylinder but declined to cover the repair. She states that the vehicle is still at the dealership because it is too dangerous to drive and requests assistance regarding this matter.

We assume that [REDACTED] is referring to the highly publicized recall from earlier this year affecting several GM vehicles which was also the subject of Congressional hearings (NHTSA Safety Recall Campaign 14V-047, summary enclosed). The recall was recently expanded to include more vehicles (14V-355 and 14V-346, summaries enclosed). The recall addresses a problem with defective ignition switches that can result in a stall condition or cause the air bags to malfunction in a crash. MY 1995 Buick Regal vehicles are not included in the recalls. However, NHTSA's Office of Defects Investigation is monitoring all available data concerning the defective ignition switches in GM vehicles but no additional determinations have been reached at this time.

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She states that the problem has been reported to NHTSA and is surprised that the vehicle has not been recalled by General Motors (GM). However, we searched our complaint database but could not locate a prior report from [REDACTED] regarding her daughter's vehicle problem. The information you provided has been entered into our database. It will be considered with future reports to identify any safety defect trends that may require our attention. We enclosed a brochure for [REDACTED] information explaining the NHTSA investigation and recall process which is also on our website at www-odi.nhtsa.dot.gov/recalls/recallprocess.cfm.

Please note that there is a limitation for a free repair under a recall based on the age of the vehicle. In order to be eligible for a free remedy, the vehicle cannot be more than 10 years old on the date the recall was initiated. Under the law, the age of the vehicle is calculated from the date of sale to the first purchaser. According to the vehicle identification number [REDACTED] provided, her daughter's vehicle was first purchased in January 1996, which calculates to approximately 18 years in service. The vehicle is 8 years beyond the limitation so even if it was recalled in 2014; GM would not be obligated to perform a free remedy.

I hope this information is helpful. If you have any questions, please contact me or Ms. Nancy L. Lewis, Associate Administrator for Enforcement, at (202) 366-3217.

Sincerely yours,



Kristin J. Kingsley
Acting Director, Governmental Affairs,
Policy and Strategic Planning

Enclosures