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Cincinnati, OH

1/20/2020

NHTSA Headquarters
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE.
West Building
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Vehicle dash display night hazard

Dear NHTSA Representative:

I am writing this letter to inform you of a potential motor vehicle hazard involving a vehicle dash display. We experienced this condition recently, narrowly avoiding an accident.

While driving at night, the driver accidentally turned off the vehicle's headlights (while intending to turn on the windshield wipers). This caused the entire dash display to go to full daytime brightness, blinding both the driver and passenger. During the several seconds it took to figure out what happened and get the headlights back on, visibility to the outside was zero, and so navigation was impossible.

Fortunately, once we got the headlights back on the driver was able to get the vehicle back into the proper lane without incident.

I wish to make the case there is no reason a dash display should ever come to full brightness while the vehicle is in the dark, certainly not while underway. I believe this is an omission in the related computer programming of *any* motor vehicle which exhibits this phenomenon. Back when dash displays occupied a small aspect of the driver's vision range, this may have not caused a hazard, but the new, larger displays are quite different and also a great deal brighter, throwing considerably more light.

For reference, the vehicle we were driving is a 2017 Subaru Outback, VIN 4S4BSACC2 H3 [REDACTED]. However, I would bet this hazard is not limited to this make or model. I think it would be incorrect to proceed as if it were.

I took this to our Subaru dealership and their suggestion was to turn the display brightness down. Hardly an acceptable solution. So adjusted, the display is too dim whether in daylight or at night. This is not a thing a dealership can fix.

I submit the only correct solution is to amend any and all vehicles' programming, where this hazard is found. A good start might be to ensure this hazardous condition is eliminated in new vehicles.

Feel free to contact me if I may be of any further help.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

cc: Subaru of America, Inc., One Subaru Drive, Camden, NJ 08103

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