

From: [REDACTED]
To: [EVOO \(NHTSA\)](#); [REDACTED]
Cc: [NHTSA ODI CRD](#); [REDACTED]
Subject: ODI-11497257
Date: Thursday, January 19, 2023 3:15:50 PM

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[REDACTED]
Subject: NHTSA ID: 11497257 Spontaneous Airbag Deployment
To: nhtsa.webmaster@dot.gov

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To whom it may concern,

On December 13, 2022, I reported to NHTSA the spontaneous deployments of the side and curtain airbags (only on the passenger side) in our 2013 Dodge Grand Caravan (NHTSA tracking no. 11497257). I wish to give an update on the situation, particularly the confounding results of an investigation into our incident by Stellantis for Chrysler Fiat Automobiles.

After having our (only) vehicle for nearly a month, we received a letter on January 13, 2023, from Stellantis. We were told that after having reviewed the details of the inspection report, they "were not led to believe that the reported incident was due to manufacturing responsibility." Clearly this awkwardly worded sentence does not imply that they found affirmative evidence showing that they are not responsible. It seems to be an admission that they could not determine the cause of the spontaneous deployment of the airbags. Their conclusion is concerning, particularly given the car had two previous recalls to remedy potential deployment problems with the very airbags that deployed in our car. They gave, without evidence, hypothetical factors for the incident, such as "the amount of time [the vehicle] was on the road" (3 to 5 minutes), the age of the car (ten years) and its mileage (approximately 30,000 miles less than the average car of that age). They then mentioned our warranty had expired. It is further concerning that my disabled partner could have been killed had the airbags deployed 15 minutes later (after I picked her up), and perhaps any passenger in a Chrysler vehicle with 87,000 miles, and for basic safety failures, CFA would bear no responsibility, that unexplained airbags deploying can merely be a warranty issue.

This brings me to another issue. Both the BraunAbility dealer (where the vehicle was modified and sold) and Stellantis suggested that we simply file a claim with our auto insurer. But somehow they miss the vital point: even if we can get the van repaired with new airbags, the cause of the spontaneous deployment remains undetermined; how can we know it will not happen again, and this time with my partner in the seat.

Finally, Stellantis suggested that the aftermarket accessibility modifications to the vehicle might be the culprit. That is a strong possibility, for we reported strange electrical issues to the dealer (Adaptive Driving Access, now called United Access), but because these occurred sporadically, they were unable to replicate the behavior—the unreplicable one was this: every now and then when the car would run over even small bumps or uneven road, there would be a beep (as though a warning light had come on) with the overhead lights blinking. The behavior would last from 5 minutes to off and on for a day or so, then stop for months. It happened to occur a day or so before the airbags deployed.

We suspected the aftermarket modifications and hoped Chrysler's investigation would test for that too. I think they did not, and to find out, I asked Stellantis to send us copies of all data, procedures, and findings associated with their investigation of our van. Unfortunately, they were less than helpful, saying that their results were confidential and proprietary, and if we doubted their inconclusive conclusion, we could hire an investigator of our own. We don't doubt that their investigation was inconclusive, we simply think its scope might have been narrowed enough

to ensure inconclusive results. Moreover, we don't think that their ignorance of what caused the incident warrants claims that they certainly escape responsibility.

Is it possible that NHTSA can request that data or instigate an investigation that would search more broadly for the cause of this incident?

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Thank you,

[REDACTED]

ASRC Federal Holding Company

[REDACTED]

7000 Muirkirk Meadows Drive, Beltsville, MD 20705

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