



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

ODI RESUME

Investigation: PE09-048
Date Opened: 09/30/2009
Date Closed: 02/25/2010
Principal Investigator: Lawrence Hershman
Subject: Saab Belt Retractor

Manufacturer: General Motors Corp., Saab Cars USA, Inc.
Products: 2004 Saab 9-3 Sedans
Population: 14,126

Problem Description: Front seat belt retractor breaks resulting in a non-functioning seat belt.

FAILURE REPORT SUMMARY

	ODI	Manufacturer	Total
Complaints:	9	78	82
Crashes/Fires:	0	0	0
Injury Incidents:	0	0	0
# Injuries:	0	0	0
Fatality Incidents:	0	0	0
# Fatalities:	0	0	0
Other*:	0	1,259	1,259

*Description of Other: Warranty Claims

Action: Close PE09048. General Motors is conducting Recall 10V-043 to correct the problem.

Engineer: Lawrence Hershman LH
Div. Chief: D. Scott Yon
Office Dir.: Kathleen C. DeMeter

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Summary:

ODI has received eight complaints of front seat belt retractors breaking on model year 2004 Saab 9-3 vehicles. The common failure scenario involves the driver hearing a noise and the belt suddenly losing tension. A non-functioning seat belt increases the risk and severity of injury in the event of a crash.

General Motors initiated a recall in May 2004 (04V-226) to replace both front seat belts because of a similar problem in 25,355 model year 2003 and 5,980 model year 2004 Saab 9-3 sedans. The retractors contained an Automatic Tensioning System (ATS), a design feature and mechanism to enhance occupant comfort by reducing shoulder belt pressure. The investigation found that the cable in the ATS mechanism was damaged during the supplier's manufacturing process. The failures occurred when the cable broke.

Recall 04V-226 did not cover model year 2004 9-3 sedans manufactured after September 30, 2004, and before May 10, 2004, which incorporated modified ATS manufacturing processes. The current investigation finds that the ATS on the drivers' seats on the post-recall population is failing prematurely. This is a different problem than the manufacturing defect that led to the original recall. General Motors now will recall the balance of 2004 Saab 9-3 sedan driver seat belt retractors with the ATS feature.

Not all 2004 9-3 seat belt retractors are subject to recall. The retractors on 9-3 sedan passenger seats, due to their less frequent use than drivers' seats, do not have the same risk of premature failure as those on the drivers' seats. Saab will replace the passenger side retractors for 10 years from new vehicle date of sale under a special coverage program. Model year 2004 9-3 convertibles have a different seat/seat belt design and construction. Saab 9-3 vehicles manufactured on and after May 10, 2004, do not have the ATS feature and therefore are not subject to this problem.

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