U.S. Department of Transportation

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

ODI RESUME

OFFICE OF DEFECTS INVESTIGATION

NHTSA

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Investigation: PE 21-007
Date Opened: 03/11/2021
Investigator: Samuel Wilson **Reviewer:** Bruce York-B
Approver: Stephen Ridella
Subject: Car (Child) Seat Crashworthiness

MANUFACTURER & PRODUCT INFORMATION

Manufacturer: Britax Child Safety, Inc.
Products: 2015 Britax ClickTight Frontier XE
Population: 80,000 (Estimated)

Problem Description: A subject car seat failed structurally during a frontal collision potentially contributing to the death of the child occupant.

FAILURE REPORT SUMMARY

	ODI	Manufacturer	Total
Complaints:	1	1	1
Crashes/Fires:	1	1	1
Injury Incidents:	0	0	0
Fatality Incidents:	1	1	1
Number of Fatalities:	1	1	1

ACTION / SUMMARY INFORMATION

Action: Open this Preliminary Evaluation.

Summary:

The subject production year 2015 Britax Frontier ClickTight XE is a booster seat commonly used for children 2-years-old and older weighing between 25-90 pounds while traveling in a vehicle. The Office of Defects Investigation (ODI) was petitioned under Defect Petition DP20-003 regarding a November 2019 crash event involving a subject seat. The crash involved a Model Year (MY) 2016 Nissan Rogue striking a telephone pole in a frontal collision. A subject seat, installed at the driver side rear seat, experienced a structural failure allowing the harness to pull through the seat back. According to a police report, this failure contributed to the death of a 4-year-old occupant. Notably there were two other occupants in the Rogue who survived the crash with injuries, the driver and a 3-year-old who was seated in a different make/model car seat at the rear passenger side seat position.

During the DP, ODI sent Britax a letter (dated April 17, 2020) requesting, amongst other things, a count of allegations of "the subject seat failing structurally during, or otherwise incurring structural damage as a result of, a vehicular crash event." Subject seats were defined as all Frontier Clicktight seats, regardless of production year. In its response of May 28, 2020, Britax identified a single allegation, the same crash event that was the subject of the Defect Petition received by ODI. Additionally, ODI conducted an inspection of the incident seat and vehicle, confirming the failure of the seat back and restraint system, and the significant damage to the front of the subject vehicle.

To date, no determination as to the cause of the incident seat structural failure has been established, either by ODI or Britax. In addition, questions exist regarding the installation and prior usage of the incident seat. ODI is opening this preliminary evaluation to broaden the scope of its information request to include potential structural failure allegations in other Britax model seats, and to potentially evaluate peer car seats, in order to establish a broader data set upon which to base its assessment.

There are two vehicle owner questionnaire reports, both submitted by the petitioner, which can be reviewed at

NHTSA.gov under the following reference numbers: 11319247 and 11317879. Britax's response to ODI's request letter is also available for review at NHTSA.gov under Investigation DP20-002.