



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



September 3, 2024

VIA EMAIL

Ms. Andrea Martin
Assistant Vice President
Product Regulatory Office
American Honda Motor Co., Inc.
1919 Torrance Blvd.
Torrance, CA 90501

Subject: Information Request ID EA23003-02

Dear Ms. Martin:

As you are aware, the Office of Defects Investigation (ODI) of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has opened an Engineering Analysis (EA23-003) to investigate allegations of momentary increased steering effort in certain model year (MY) 2022-2023 Honda Civic, 2023 Acura Integra, and 2023 Honda CR-V vehicles manufactured by American Honda Motor Co., Inc. (Honda). To assist us at this stage of the investigation, ODI is requesting additional information concerning the steering system in the vehicles cited above.

Unless otherwise stated in the text, the following definitions apply to these information requests:

- **Subject Vehicles:** All 2022-2023MY Honda Civic, 2023 Acura Integra, and 2023 Honda CR-V vehicles manufactured for sale or lease in the United States, including but not limited to the District of Columbia, and current U.S. territories and possessions.
- **Subject Component:** The electronic power steering system in the Subject Vehicles, including the steering gear, steering control module, and steering control software.
- **Peer Vehicles:** All 2024MY Honda CR-V, 2024MY Acura Integra, 2023-2024MY Honda HR-V vehicles manufactured for sale or lease in the United States, including but not limited to the District of Columbia, and current U.S. territories and possessions.
- **Alleged Defect:** Momentary increase in steering effort.
- **Subject Technical Service Bulletin (TSB):** Service Bulletin 24-052.

Honda: American Honda Motor Co., Inc., all of its past and present officers and employees, whether assigned to its principal offices or any of its field or other locations, including all of its divisions, subsidiaries (whether or not incorporated) and affiliated enterprises and all of their headquarters, regional, zone and other offices and their employees, and all agents, contractors, consultants, attorneys and law firms and other persons engaged directly or indirectly (e.g., employee of a consultant) by or under the control of Honda (including all business units and persons previously referred to), who are or were involved in any way as of January 1, 2014, with any of the following related to the alleged defect in the Subject Vehicles:

- a. Design, engineering, analysis, modification or production (e.g., quality control);
 - b. Testing, assessment or evaluation;
 - c. Consideration, or recognition of potential or actual defects, reporting, record-keeping and information management, (e.g., complaints, field reports, warranty information, part sales), analysis, claims, lawsuits or arbitrations; or
 - d. Communication to, from or intended for zone representatives, fleets, dealers, or other field locations, including but not limited to people who have the capacity to obtain information from dealers.
- **Document:** “Document(s)” is used in the broadest sense of the word and shall mean all original written, printed, typed, recorded, or graphic matter whatsoever, however produced or reproduced, of every kind, nature, and description, and all non-identical copies of both sides thereof, including, but not limited to, papers, letters, memoranda, correspondence, communications, electronic mail (e-mail) messages (existing in hard copy and/or in electronic storage), faxes, mailgrams, telegrams, cables, telex messages, notes, annotations, working papers, drafts, minutes, records, audio and video recordings, data, databases, other information bases, summaries, charts, tables, graphics, other visual displays, photographs, statements, interviews, opinions, reports, newspaper articles, studies, analyses, evaluations, interpretations, contracts, agreements, jottings, agendas, bulletins, notices, announcements, instructions, blueprints, drawings, as-builts, changes, manuals, publications, work schedules, journals, statistical data, desk, portable and computer calendars, appointment books, diaries, travel reports, lists, tabulations, computer printouts, data processing program libraries, data processing inputs and outputs, microfilms, microfiches, statements for services, resolutions, financial statements, governmental records, business records, personnel records, work orders, pleadings, discovery in any form, affidavits, motions, responses to discovery, all transcripts, administrative filings and all mechanical, magnetic, photographic and electronic records or recordings of any kind, including any storage media associated with computers, including, but not limited to, information on hard drives, floppy disks, backup tapes, and zip drives, electronic communications, including but not limited to, the Internet and shall include any drafts or revisions pertaining to any of the foregoing, all other things similar to any of the foregoing, however denominated by Honda, any other data compilations from which information can be obtained, translated if necessary, into a usable form and any other documents. For purposes of this request, any document which contains any note, comment, addition, deletion, insertion, annotation, or otherwise comprises a non-identical copy of another document shall be treated as a separate document subject to production. In all cases where original and any non-identical copies are not available,

“document(s)” also means any identical copies of the original and all non-identical copies thereof. Any document, record, graph, chart, film or photograph originally produced in color must be provided in color. Furnish all documents whether verified by Honda or not. If a document is not in the English language, provide both the original document and an English translation of the document.

- **Other Terms:** To the extent that they are used in these information requests, the terms “claim,” “consumer complaint,” “dealer field report,” “field report,” “fire,” “fleet,” “good will,” “make,” “model,” “model year,” “notice,” “property damage,” “property damage claim,” “rollover,” “type,” “warranty,” “warranty adjustment,” and “warranty claim,” whether used in singular or in plural form, have the same meaning as found in 49 C.F.R. § 579.4.

In order for my staff to evaluate the alleged defect, certain information is required. Pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 30166, please provide numbered responses to the following information requests. Insofar as Honda has previously provided a document to ODI, Honda may produce it again or identify the document, the document submission to ODI in which it was included and the precise location in that submission where the document is located. When documents are produced, the documents shall be produced in an identified, organized manner that corresponds with the organization of this information request letter (including all individual requests and subparts). When documents are produced and the documents would not, standing alone, be self-explanatory, the production of documents shall be supplemented and accompanied by explanation.

Please repeat the applicable request verbatim above each response. After Honda’s response to each request, identify the source of the information and indicate the last date the information was gathered.

1. Describe all assessments, analyses, tests, test results, studies, surveys, simulations, investigations, inquiries and/or evaluations (collectively, “actions”) that relate to, or may relate to, the Alleged Defect and/or the related TSB(s) in the Subject and Peer Vehicles that have been conducted, are being conducted, are planned, or are being planned by, or for, Honda. For each such action, provide the following information:
 - a. Action title or identifier;
 - b. The actual or planned start date;
 - c. The actual or expected end date;
 - d. A brief summary of the subject and objective of the action;
 - e. Any root cause analysis done (e.g., 5 Whys, Fishbone, etc.) related to the subject TSB procedure;
 - f. Engineering group(s)/supplier(s) responsible for designing and for conducting the action;
 - g. A brief summary of the findings and/or conclusions resulting from the action; and
 - h. Copies of all documents related to the action, regardless of whether the documents are in interim, draft, or final form. Organize the documents chronologically by action.
2. Quantify the expected benefit to the Subject Component of the Subject TSB procedure.

3. State the minimum amount of grease required to sufficiently lubricate the worm wheel in the Subject Component to ensure proper performance of the Subject Component.
4. Provide any test results and reports used to determine the minimum amount of grease required to sufficiently lubricate the worm wheel in the Subject Component to ensure proper performance of the Subject Component identified in your response to Request 3.
5. Explain how the procedure in the Subject TSB addresses the lubrication of the worm gear in the Subject Component in circumstances where, during the procedure, it is discovered that there is less than the minimum amount of grease present than that which is required to lubricate the worm wheel to ensure proper performance of the Subject Component as identified in your response to Request 3?
6. Explain how the Subject TSB addresses the possibility of grease degradation and ensures the grease present in the worm gear in the Subject Component will meet Honda's specifications.
7. Describe in detail how Honda determined that grease degradation is not a factor to be addressed in the Subject TSB. Provide any related test reports and results.
8. Explain how the Subject TSB addresses permanent mechanical wear of the gears, including tooth deformation. State also whether any testing of such wear was done prior to the release of the Subject TSB.
9. The Subject TSB calls for the replacement of the spring seat, spring, and end cap in the Subject Component. Describe in detail the differences between the originals of such parts installed in the Subject Vehicles, and their replacement parts installed under the Subject TSB. Include in your description the effect of any differences on the performance of the Subject Component, and the difference in spring tension.
10. Describe in detail the differences between the version of the Subject Component being installed in current production, and any and all prior versions of the Subject Component after the application of the Subject TSB.
11. State the cost to consumers, if any, for the performance of the Subject TSB if their vehicle is out-of-warranty.
12. Provide a list of all service bulletins, by identification number, that involve the Subject Component.

Legal Authority for This Request

This letter is being sent to Honda pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 30166, which authorizes NHTSA to conduct any investigation that may be necessary to enforce Chapter 301 of Title 49 and to request reports. It constitutes a new request for information.

Civil Penalties

Honda's failure to respond promptly and fully to this letter could subject Honda to civil penalties pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 30165 or lead to an action for injunctive relief pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 30163. (Other remedies and sanctions are available as well.) The Vehicle Safety Act, 49 U.S.C. § 30165(a)(3), provides for civil penalties of up to \$27,168 per violation per day, with a maximum of \$135,828,178 for a related series of daily violations, for failing or refusing to perform an act required under 49 U.S.C. § 30166. *See* 49 C.F.R. § 578.6(a)(3). This includes failing to respond completely, accurately, or in a timely manner to ODI information requests.

If Honda cannot respond to any specific request or subpart(s) thereof, please state the reason why it is unable to do so. If on the basis of attorney-client, attorney work product, or other privilege, Honda does not submit one or more requested documents or items of information in response to this information request, Honda must provide a privilege log identifying each document or item withheld, and stating the date, subject or title, the name and position of the person(s) from, and the person(s) to whom it was sent, and the name and position of any other recipient (to include all carbon copies or blind carbon copies), the nature of that information or material, and the basis for the claim of privilege and why that privilege applies.

Confidential Business Information (CBI)

If Honda's response contains any information that you claim is confidential business information, Honda must submit its request for confidential treatment and any files containing CBI to NHTSA's Office of the Chief Counsel via the CBI Portal or a secure electronic file transfer link. Please see enclosure 1 for additional instructions on submitting a request for confidential treatment that is compliant with 49 C.F.R. Part 512 (specifically, a request for confidential treatment must include the four required parts that are discussed in enclosure 1).

If you choose not to submit your request and files containing CBI to NHTSA's Office of the Chief Counsel via the CBI Portal, please notify the investigator referenced in this IR to ensure that the secure file transfer link for your request for confidential treatment and any files containing CBI are directed to the Office of the Chief Counsel accordingly.

In addition to submitting a request for confidential treatment and files containing CBI directly to NHTSA's Office of the Chief Counsel, Honda must also submit its request for confidential treatment, the files containing CBI, and their corresponding redacted versions directly to ODI via the Safety Defect Investigations (SDI) Portal. The requests for confidential treatment and certification documents are not confidential so these documents should be uploaded as non-confidential files.

Please refer to EA23-003 in Honda's response to this letter and in the request for confidential treatment that Honda may submit.

Due Date

Honda's response to this letter must be submitted to this office by **SEPTEMBER 25, 2024**. If Honda finds that it is unable to provide all of the information requested within the time allotted,

Honda must request an extension from Sharon Yukevich at 202-366-4925, 202-836-3605, or sharon.yukevich@dot.gov no later than five business days before the response due date. If Honda is unable to provide all of the information requested by the original deadline, it must submit a partial response by the original deadline with whatever information Honda then has available, even if an extension has been granted.

If you have any technical questions concerning this matter, please call Stefanie Oldenburg of my staff at (202) 366-7077.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tanya Topka".

Tanya Topka
Acting Office Director
Office of Defects Investigation

Enclosure 1, Information for Requests for Confidential Treatment.

ENCLOSURE 1 – INFORMATION FOR REQUESTS FOR CONFIDENTIAL TREATMENT

If you believe that your response contains any material that you claim is confidential business information, submit these materials to NHTSA's Office of the Chief Counsel in accordance with 49 C.F.R. Part 512. **All requests for confidential treatment must be submitted directly to the Office of the Chief Counsel via the Confidential Business Information (CBI) Portal or a secure file transfer link for your submission addressed to the Office of the Chief Counsel. If you are not currently registered for the CBI Portal, you may send a registration request to cbi-helpdesk@dot.gov. In addition to directly submitting the files to the Office of the Chief Counsel, you will also need to submit your request, the files containing CBI, and their corresponding redacted versions directly to ODI through the Safety Defect Investigations (SDI) Portal.**

Requests for confidential treatment are governed by Part 512. A current version of this regulation is available on the internet at <http://www.ecfr.gov> by selecting Title 49 "Transportation," selecting "Parts 500 – 599" and then selecting Part 512 "Confidential Business Information."

How to request confidential treatment:

NHTSA is currently treating electronic submission as an acceptable method for submitting confidential business information to the agency under Part 512. If you claim that any of the information or documents provided in your response constitutes confidential business information within the meaning of 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(4), or are protected from disclosure pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 1905, you must submit the information or documents directly to the Office of Chief Counsel via the CBI Portal or request a secure file transfer link from the ODI contact listed in your Information Request. You must submit supporting information together with the materials that are the subject of the confidentiality request, in accordance with Part 512, to the Office of the Chief Counsel. Do not send a hardcopy of a request for confidential treatment to NHTSA's headquarters.

Your request must include a request letter that contains supporting information, pursuant to Part 512.8. Your request must also include a certificate, pursuant to Part 512.4(b) and Part 512, Appendix A.

You are required to submit one unredacted "confidential version" of the information for which you are seeking confidential treatment. Pursuant to Part 512.6, the words "ENTIRE PAGE CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS INFORMATION" or "CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS INFORMATION CONTAINED WITHIN BRACKETS" (as applicable) must appear at the top of each page containing information claimed to be confidential. In the latter situation, where not all information on the page is claimed to be confidential, identify each item of information for which confidentiality is requested within brackets: "[]."

You are also required to submit one redacted "public version" of the information for which you are seeking confidential treatment. Pursuant to Part 512.5(a)(2), the redacted "public version" should include redactions of any information for which you are seeking confidential treatment (i.e., the only information that should be unredacted is information for which you are **not** seeking confidential treatment).

For questions about a request for confidential treatment, please contact Dan Rabinovitz in the Office of the Chief Counsel at Daniel.Rabinovitz@dot.gov or (202) 366-8534.