

04V-036

**GM SERVICE AND PARTS OPERATIONS
DCS1122
URGENT - DISTRIBUTE IMMEDIATELY**

Data: January 30, 2004

Subject: Upcoming Safety Recall
Ignition Circuit Thermal Events

Models: 1998 Buick Skylark
1998-2001 Chevrolet Cavalier
1998 Oldsmobile Achieva
1998 Pontiac Grand Am
1998-2001 Pontiac Sunfire

To: All Buick, Chevrolet, Oldsmobile and Pontiac Dealers

Attention: Dealer Operator, General Manager, Sales Manager, Used Car Manager,
Service Manager, Parts Manager and Warranty Administrator

Based on information from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) web site, the media may report that General Motors will be announcing a safety recall involving certain 1998 model year Buick Skylark; 1998-2001 model year Chevrolet Cavalier; 1998 model year Oldsmobile Achieva; 1998 model year Pontiac Grand Am; and 1998-2001 model year Pontiac Sunfire vehicles.

If the engine fails to start and the driver holds the key in the "start" position for an extended period, high current flows through the ignition switch and sometimes produces enough heat to melt internal switch parts. Partially melted or damaged ignition switch components could cause a fire to occur in the steering column, even with the engine off and the key removed. The fire could spread to the interior and could injure occupants of the car or cause damage to adjoining structures.

To correct this condition dealers will install a low current relay into the ignition circuit. Additionally, they will functionally test the ignition switch and, if necessary, replace it. These repairs will be performed at no cost to the customers. Battery replacement and other normal starting system maintenance, however, are not covered by this recall.

There are approximately 1.8 million vehicles involved. GM is working with its suppliers to obtain the parts needed to correct this condition as quickly as possible. Based on the anticipated schedule, we plan to notify customers about this recall starting March 1, 2004. GMVIS Information will not be available until the recall is formally announced.

Listed below are some anticipated questions and answers to assist in responding to customer inquiries.

Q1: What is the condition that prompted a safety recall?

A1: The ignition switch can be damaged when the battery is weak and if the key is held in the start position for an extended period.

Q2: What might occur as a result of this condition?

A2: If the engine starter "clicks" but does not crank the engine and the driver holds the key in the "start" position for an extended period, high current flows through the ignition switch and sometimes produces enough heat to melt internal switch parts and possibly ignite.

Q3: Is there a reason for being concerned about this condition?

A3: If the ignition switch has deteriorated to the point that an overheating condition occurs, a fire could result that could damage the steering column, instrument panel, carpeting, seats, and door panels. This could occur even with the engine off and the key removed.

Q4: How does a fire occur with the engine off and the key removed?

A4: The melting switch cam may create a near closed or closed condition of the switch that allows the starter circuit to remain energized after the release of the key. Heat continues to build up and the melting plastic drips out of the switch and can cause a fire.

Q5: Did GM conduct a recall in 2002 involving 1995-1997 cars for the same condition?

A5: Yes. GM recalled approximately 1.9 million 1995-1997 Chevrolet Cavalier and Pontiac Sunfire and 1996-1997 Buick Skylark, Pontiac Grand Am, and Oldsmobile Achieva model vehicles. We announced this recall in March 2002. The recall identification number is 02008.

Q6: Is this a different recall?

A6: GM is adding additional vehicles to the earlier recall but we are assigning a different number for tracking purposes. The identification number for this recall will be 04002 when it's officially announced in late February.

Q7: Are any other model year vehicles involved?

A7: No. Only 1998 model year Buick Skylark; 1998-2001 model year Chevrolet Cavalier; 1998 model year Oldsmobile Achieva; 1998 model year Pontiac Grand Am; and 1998-2001 model year Pontiac Sunfire vehicles are involved. These vehicles were built between March 1997 and April 2001.

Q8: Can we expect that the condition will surface in other Buick Skylark, Oldsmobile Achieva, Pontiac Grand Am cars built after 1998 and Chevrolet Cavalier and Sunfire passenger cars built after 2001 and will have to be recalled?

A8: No. Skylarks and Achievas were not built after 1998. Cavaliers and Sunfires built after April 2001 have a different ignition circuit design and will not experience this condition.

Q9: How would a vehicle owner realize the condition exists?

A9: If the vehicle has never had the noted "click-no-crank" condition, damage to the ignition switch and subsequent thermal events would be unlikely. If the vehicle has been subjected to the "click-no-crank" with the key held for an extended time, the heat build up and potential of fire could occur without warning.

Q10: What can be done to prevent this condition?

A10: There are two important precautions that vehicle owners can take to reduce the potential of a fire.

- Do not hold the key in the "start" position if the starter does not immediately begin cranking the engine. A low battery charge and other starting system problems can create a situation where the driver turns the key to the "start" position and nothing happens other than a clicking sound. If that happens, turn the key back to "off" immediately. Holding the key in "start" longer will not help to start the car, but can cause damage to the ignition switch that can eventually lead to a fire.
- If you encounter difficulty starting your car, have it repaired promptly to minimize the potential for damage to the ignition switch. The ignition switch in your vehicle may become damaged and the damage could lead to a fire if you:
 - (1) have a falling battery and do not replace it promptly and
 - (2) experience "click" with no start three or more times and
 - (3) jump-start the car three or more times.

Q11: How was this condition discovered?

A11: GM analyzed reports from customers and inspected and tested vehicles and parts as part of its engineering analysis.

Q12: Have there been any reports of incidents and injuries?

A12: GM is aware of 80 incidents of heat build up, melted components, smoldering parts, or fires. There have been no reports of injuries or fatalities due to this condition. There are no reports of a fire caused by this condition while these vehicles are being driven. Most of the fires occurred within minutes of an unsuccessful attempt to start the car. Some of the incidents occurred after the car had been unattended for a longer time.

Q13: What will GM do to correct this condition on the subject vehicles?

A13: Buick, Chevrolet, Oldsmobile, and Pontiac dealers will install a low current relay into the ignition circuit. Additionally, they will functionally test the ignition switch and, if necessary, replace it. These repairs will be performed at no cost to the customers. Battery replacement and other normal starting system maintenance, however, are not covered by this recall.

IMPORTANT: The relay kit was designed exclusively for this recall and was not part of the vehicle when manufactured. Any pre-existing vehicle starting difficulties will not be corrected by the installation of the relay kit.

Q14: How will GM notify owners of the recall of their vehicles?

A14: GM is notifying owners via letter. The mailing of these letters will begin March 1, 2004. The letters will instruct owners when to contact their dealers to schedule repairs. In summary, owners of 1998 and 1999 model vehicles will be asked to contact their dealers right away to schedule repairs. Owners of 2000 model vehicles should contact their dealers in May, and owners of 2001 model vehicles should contact their dealers in June.

Q15: Why can't GM begin repairing all vehicles in March or sooner?

A15: Due to the large number of vehicles involved in this recall, it will take several weeks to build and ship enough parts to fix the condition for the 1998 and 1999 model vehicles involved. It will take several months to build and ship the subsequent parts to fix the 2000 and 2001 model vehicles in the recall population. This will help ensure a steady supply of parts and assist dealers with vehicle scheduling.

Q16: Will dealers provide free loaner or rental vehicles?

A16: No. There are no provisions in this recall for dealers to provide customers with free loaner or rental vehicles. Customers should check with their dealer about other forms of courtesy transportation (i.e., shuttle service).

Q17: Is reimbursement available for previous starting system repairs?

A17: Previous ignition switch replacement and related wiring repair will be considered for possible reimbursement on a case-by-case basis. Confirmation of why the ignition switch was replaced and related wiring repaired (i.e., heat damage, fuse blown, etc.) and that there are no other contributing factors (i.e., aftermarket remote starters, alarm systems, etc.) will be required. Such reimbursement will be limited to reasonable and customary charges for this type of service. Reimbursement for replacement of a steering column tilt lever is allowable since the lever may have been damaged when the ignition switch was replaced.

IMPORTANT: Reimbursement for battery replacement and/or the repair of other starting system components is not covered by this recall.

A GM Product Recall Customer Reimbursement Procedure Form will be included with the customer letter and should be submitted to the GM Customer Assistance Center for processing if a customer is seeking reimbursement. Dealers should refer to the GM Service Policies and Procedures Manual, Section 6.1.12, for specific procedures regarding customer reimbursement and the form.

Q18: Are these vehicles safe to drive?

A18: The vehicles that are part of this recall meet all MVSS standards and are safe to drive if the starting system has been properly maintained and the precautions described above are followed. These precautions will be included in the customer notification letters that we will begin mailing on March 1, 2004.

A fire due to this condition is not a common occurrence. Drivers can continue to operate their vehicles but should schedule the vehicle for repair per the instructions in the recall notification letter.

Q19: What if the driver experiences failure to start or prolonged starter motor "click-no-crank" time before they get the recall notice?

A19: If drivers experience failure to start or prolonged starter motor "click-no-crank" time, they should contact a dealer for repair. It would be wise not to park vehicles that exhibit such symptoms in the garage or near anything that could ignite.

Please contact the GM Dealer Business Center at 1-888-414-6322 (Prompt #3) if you have questions about this message.

END OF MESSAGE

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