

Chronology of Defect / Noncompliance Determination 2011 Hyundai Elantra and Sonata front Coil Spring

In October 2014, Hyundai received a field report noting a left-front coil fracture on a model year 2011 Hyundai Elantra vehicle causing suspension noise. Hyundai conducted an analysis of warranty claims and found that front coil spring claims had risen in the previous winter climate months, particularly in several of the states commonly referred to as the “salt belt.” The claims occurred primarily on vehicles manufactured during the vehicle’s initial production months prior to April, 2011. In reviewing prior NHTSA investigations, including EA08-018, Hyundai did not believe that this issue arose to a safety defect. As such, Hyundai began monitoring warranty claims and warranty part returns for analysis.

By February 2015, Hyundai had analyzed field incident parts, and although the investigation is ongoing, it is believed the fractures are the result of stress corrosion cracking (the growth of crack formation in a corrosive environment).

In April 2015, a driving evaluation was conducted to determine the effect of a tire puncture to the vehicle handling stability of a Hyundai Elantra during certain driving maneuvers. Based on this evaluation and the absence of accidents caused by a tire puncture due to a broken front coil spring, Hyundai concluded that vehicle stability could be maintained while driving should this condition occur. Hyundai continued to monitor warranty claims and analyze the field information.

In June 2015, NHTSA notified Hyundai of four customer complaints it received on model year 2011 Hyundai Sonatas with coil spring fractures. Hyundai conducted an analysis of warranty claims and found that similar to the Elantra front coil spring claims, the claims were concentrated on vehicles manufactured during the vehicle’s initial production months and occurred primarily in the salt belt states – 99 percent of Elantra claims within the affected range; 98 percent of Sonata claims within the affected range. Hyundai subsequently discussed this issue with NHTSA.

In August 2015, Hyundai reviewed the current claim rate for both the MY 2011 Elantra and Sonata, prior coil spring recalls, and NHTSA’s opening resume on PE15-019. In September, 2015, NHTSA published the IR response in PE15-019, which Hyundai reviewed. To date, Hyundai’s rates remain significantly lower than the rates mentioned in either EA08-018, PE15-019, or NHTSA Recall No. 14V435. On September 30, 2015 Hyundai made the determination to proceed with a safety recall campaign, even though there have been no accidents or injuries, or reports of significant loss of vehicle stability or control.