Counterfeit Airbags

TO:	SDC EST CEN WST
FROM:	Subaru of America, Inc.
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The U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has issued a consumer safety advisory to alert vehicle owners and repair professionals to the dangers of counterfeit air bags.

NHTSA has become aware of a problem involving the sale of counterfeit air bags for use as replacement parts in vehicles that have been involved in a crash. While these air bags look nearly identical to certified, original equipment parts—including bearing the insignia and branding of major automakers—NHTSA testing showed the airbags often malfunctioned or deployed dangerously.

NHTSA is not aware of any deaths or injuries connected to counterfeit air bags.

Subaru vehicles are no more likely to experience counterfeit airbags than any other make's.

To assist owners Subaru will direct customers to their corporate customer service hotline (i.e. CDS: **1-800-SUBARU3 or 1-800-782-2783**) rather than their local dealer. Likewise, Subaru dealers should direct concerned customers to the CDS hotline. The CDS representative will assist the customer in determining if a dealer inspection and/or air bag replacement is necessary.

In the near future, Subaru dealers will be provided with a specific inspection protocol for vehicles that may be at risk.

Key Points

NHTSA believes that consumers could be at risk if their vehicle's air bag has been replaced within the past 3 years. Vehicles repaired at an independent body shop on behalf of a new vehicle dealer may also be considered at risk.

It has been reported that some independent body shops provided inaccurate documentation to the insurance company that a genuine OEM airbag was installed when, in reality, a counterfeit one was used instead. Thus, the dealer cannot simply rely on the documentation the body shop provides to verify that a genuine OEM replacement bag was used. The airbags need to be inspected.

According to NHTSA, the supplemental restraint system fault detection system/warning lamp may have been deceived/deactivated using resistors or diodes. **Therefore, SSM3 (or other diagnostic equipment) CANNOT be used to reliably determine whether the air bag installed on a vehicle is counterfeit.** Again, the airbags need to be inspected.

If the customer purchased the vehicle used and does not know the vehicle's history, NHTSA suggests verification by commercial Web-based service (e.g. CARFAX®, AutoCheck®, etc.) to see if vehicle was involved in a crash where the air bags deployed. **NOTE: Commercial vehicle history reports are good indicators of a vehicle's history but may not capture all crashes.**

NHTSA believes customers should bear the costs of inspection and/or air bag replacement. If a customer is unwilling or cannot bear the cost, NHTSA recommends, as one option, that the customer speak with their insurance company.

NHTSA strongly advises technicians NOT to electrically probe counterfeit air bag connecting terminals because of the risk of detonation and possible serious injury.

While the scope of NHTSA's announcement focuses on frontal (driver- and front passenger-) air bags, **dealer inspection and/or replacement should include ALL air bags (as necessary), including knee, seat-mounted side, and roof-mounted curtain air bags to determine if they are counterfeit.**

ou have questions, please contact Subaru Customer-Dealer Services at or 1-800-SUBARU3 or 1-800-782-2783.