Recommended Dealer Guidance for Managing Counterfeit Air Bags

U.S. Department of Transportation

NHTSA
www.nhtsa.gov

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Version 1.0

Pre-Visit Customer Interview Questions

Initial interview with the customer to determine if an appointment is necessary *(can be done by phone)*

NOT AT RISK

- The vehicle has not had any air bags replaced due to collision or theft in the last three years or is not on NHTSA's list of affected models.
- The vehicle was purchased new and the air bags were never replaced.
- The vehicle was purchased new and the air bags were replaced by a franchised dealer (new car sales) with new OEM replaement air bags.

AT RISK

- An air bag was replaced at an independent repair facility, and it cannot be verified that the air bags were furnished by a franchised from OEM replacement stock.
  - If paid for through insurance, call your agent and ask whether they verified that an OEM replacement air bag was installed as part of the claim. Also, ask the independent repair shop for written proof that the air bag is an OEM replacement part.
  - If paid by the consumer, ask the independent repair shop for written proof that the air bag is an OEM replacement part.
- The vehicle was purchased used without verified history. Suggest 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.*
- The replacement air bag was purchased by customer or a body shop from an Internet sales or online auction company.
- The replacement air bag was purchased for significantly less than an OEM air bag module would cost.
- The vehicle has a salvage title.

If customer may be at risk, request the 17-digit VIN and customer's contact information. Send VIN information to corporate office (or log into corporate network if available) to acquire all air bag serial numbers associated with the VIN. Inform customer of potential costs associated with inspection and/or air bag replacement.

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Counterfeit Air Bag Indicators*

Counterfeit air bags are difficult to identify when installed in the vehicle. However, some visual clues that may indicate a counterfeit are:

For the air bag module still installed in the car:

- The texture of the vinyl material used for the counterfeit air bag trim cover is different from the OEM material.
- The color of the counterfeit air bag trim cover may be slightly different from the OEM parts.
- The vinyl trim cover may not have "tear seams" or slight depressions in the vinyl material that determines where the flap doors will open during deployment (typically an "H" pattern). The trim cover emblem is generally affixed to one flap of the trim cover door so it remains intact when the flaps open during deployment.
- The letters "SRS" (Supplemental Restraint System), which are embossed or molded into the vinyl trim cover are not well-defined.
- There may be evidence that the counterfeit air bag installer shaved or trimmed the vinyl trim cover for better fit into the steering wheel housing.
- The SRS light does not illuminate during "key on" or otherwise does not function as the manufacturer intended.

For after the driver's side air bag module is removed from the steering wheel:

- The counterfeit air bag module labeling generally does not match OEM quality and quantity.
- There may be no serial number or, if present, the same serial number is repeated on different or multiple counterfeit bags. OEM serial numbers are unique to each air bag. (NHTSA will share known repeated serial numbers with the affected OEMs for distribution to dealers.)
- The inflator assembly is labeled with a different OEM name than the air bag's emblem or intended fitment.
- The model number designation on the label does not match the OEM part number for that model vehicle.
- Barcode labels are repeated on different or multiple counterfeit bag modules.
- Tool marks are visible on the fasteners and/or grind marks are visible on the air bag.
- Rivets appear to be tightened by a hand tool and do not show a consistent ring pattern. OEM rivets are machine compressed and show a consistent ring pattern.
- The "warning" labeling normally found on an OEM air bag is missing.
- The colors of the inflator wire connectors do not match the OEM colors.
- Grounding terminals or "shorting bars" of the inflator wire connectors that prevent the air bag from deploying when disconnected from the vehicle system are missing.
- The backing plate of the counterfeit air bag has numerous holes drilled into it, which allows the counterfeit air bag to be installed into a wider range of vehicles.

The counterfeit air bag may have been rebuilt from a previously deployed air bag. Look for signs that the metal parts have been weakened by pyrotechnics, including burn marks or metals that have been stretched or expanded by the gases. The previously deployed air bag may have been removed from the module assembly and only the steering wheel trim cover has been replaced. The supplemental restraint system fault detection system/warning lamp may have been deceived/deactivated using resistors or diodes. Dealers should obtain from manufacturers additional guidance for identifying genuine air bags in specific models, e.g., photographs of genuine air bags to compare with possible counterfeits.

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

* Indicators are for driver's side air bags. This information is subject to change.

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