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# Automotive Safety Awareness Campaign Warns Consumers About Counterfeit Airbags

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**WASHINGTON** — Vehicle owners and drivers across the country should be on high alert for unsafe and potentially deadly counterfeit auto parts as the National Intellectual Property Rights Coordination Center (IPR Center) launches its new campaign, “Put the Brakes on Fakes.”



From Sept. 23 through Dec. 1, the IPR Center will share tips and resources to teach consumers how to put the brakes on fakes by identifying and avoiding faulty auto parts, which includes the latest [public safety announcement \(https://www.dhs.gov/new-learning?external\\_url=https%3A%2F%2Fyoutu.be%2FoyP3IEGK0-s&back\\_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.dhs.gov%2Farchive%2Fhs%2Fnews%2F2024%2F09%2F23%2FAutomotive-safety-awareness-campaign-warns-consumers-about-counterfeit-airbags\)](https://www.dhs.gov/new-learning?external_url=https%3A%2F%2Fyoutu.be%2FoyP3IEGK0-s&back_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.dhs.gov%2Farchive%2Fhs%2Fnews%2F2024%2F09%2F23%2FAutomotive-safety-awareness-campaign-warns-consumers-about-counterfeit-airbags).

The campaign was launched with the support of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), the Automotive Anti-Counterfeiting Council and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). The campaign follows their recent [consumer airbag alert \(https://www.nhtsa.gov/press-releases/used-car-owners-buyers-dangerous-replacement-air-bag-inflators\)](https://www.nhtsa.gov/press-releases/used-car-owners-buyers-dangerous-replacement-air-bag-inflators) urging used car buyers and owners to beware of cheap, substandard replacement airbag inflators that can cause death or serious injury in a crash.

“The rise in counterfeit automotive parts and equipment continue to be an alarming upward trend,” said IPR Center Director Ivan Arvelo. “This campaign, which is not just an initiative or routine consumer safety alert, is a movement to save lives, prevent the use of counterfeit parts, and ensure consumers and auto repair professionals are informed about critical risks associated with counterfeit and substandard auto parts.”

CBP has seized more than 211,000 counterfeit automotive parts in fiscal year 2024, almost doubling the number of counterfeit automotive parts seized the previous year. Of those, CBP has seized more than 490 counterfeit airbags — more than 10 times the number of counterfeit airbags seized in fiscal year 2023.

HSI also has approximately 40 open investigations into counterfeit automotive parts.

“CBP is working with its government and industry partners to keep hazardous counterfeit airbags out of supply chains and out of your vehicle. Consumers can stay safe by purchasing airbags from reputable retailers and repair shops. If a deal is too good to be true, it probably is, with potentially dangerous consequences,” said IPR Center Deputy Director Brandon Lord, who also serves as the executive director of CBP’s Trade Policy and Programs directorate.

CBP officers on the front lines at U.S. ports of entry are keeping a watchful eye on imports — particularly those from China — for shipments suspected of containing counterfeit automotive parts.

In fiscal year 2023, CBP and HSI seized about 20,000 shipments containing goods that violated Intellectual Property Rights, equating to nearly 23 million counterfeit items. The total estimated manufacturer’s suggested retail price of the seized goods would have amounted to over \$2.75 billion

had they been genuine parts. Out of those shipments, almost 100,000 items were counterfeit automotive goods, with a MSRP of over \$10 million.

"Dangerous, substandard aftermarket airbags can, and have, injured and killed people in otherwise survivable crashes. If you own a used vehicle and are unfamiliar with its crash history, you could be at risk. NHTSA encourages everyone to learn about their vehicle's history, and, if the vehicle has been in a crash, to arrange for an airbag inspection by a reputable mechanic. Taking this important step could save your life or that of someone you love," NHTSA Deputy Administrator Sophie Shulman said.

"As consumers, we trust that our vehicles are equipped with safety features that will protect us in critical moments," said Automotive Anti-Counterfeiting Council President Robert Stewart. "Counterfeit airbags and other replacement parts undermine this trust, posing severe risks to lives by failing in critical situations."

An Automotive Anti-Counterfeiting Council study, [The Online Sale of Counterfeit Automotive Parts](https://www.dhs.gov/news/2024/09/23/automotive-safety-awareness-campaign-warns-consumers-about-counterfeit-airbags) (<https://www.dhs.gov/news/2024/09/23/automotive-safety-awareness-campaign-warns-consumers-about-counterfeit-airbags>), revealed a dangerous discovery during an airbag inspection. Instead of the mechanisms that allow proper airbag deployment, a rag covered with silicone putty was discovered inside the counterfeit airbag assembly.

While HSI, CBP and partners work around the clock to stop the illicit flow of unsafe auto parts into the United States, consumers can help protect themselves and others by arming themselves with information.

If consumers suspect they have purchased a counterfeit automotive part, they can consult an original equipment manufacturer or reach out to a reputable mechanic for advice on identifying and replacing the counterfeit parts.

To report suspected counterfeits, visit [IPRCenter.gov](http://www.iprcenter.gov) (<http://www.iprcenter.gov>) or CBP's online [e-Allegations portal](https://eallegations.cbp.gov/home/allegation) (<https://eallegations.cbp.gov/home/allegation>). More information about counterfeit goods is available on CBP's [Truth Behind Counterfeits](https://www.cbp.gov/trade/fakinggoodsreal dangers) (<https://www.cbp.gov/trade/fakinggoodsreal dangers>) website and [StopFakes.gov](https://www.stopfakes.gov) (<https://www.stopfakes.gov>) (<https://www.stopfakes.gov/article?id=Top-10-Ways-to-Protect-Yourself>).

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