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## NHTSA, ICE alert consumers to dangers of counterfeit air bags





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WASHINGTON – Following investigations by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) issued a consumer safety advisory today to alert vehicle owners and repair professionals to the dangers of counterfeit air bags.

While the counterfeit air bags seized in the investigations look nearly identical to certified, original equipment parts – including bearing the insignia and branding of major automakers – NHTSA testing showed consistent malfunctioning ranging from non-deployment of the air bag to the expulsion of metal shrapnel during deployment. The agencies are not aware of any deaths or injuries connected to counterfeit air bags at this time.

While the full scope and scale of the problem of counterfeit air bags is uncertain from currently available data, ICE and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) have identified certain vehicle makes and models for which these air bags may be available based on seizures and investigations to date. NHTSA believes this issue affects less than 0.1 percent of the U.S. vehicle fleet and only vehicles which have had an air bag replaced within the past three years by a repair shop that is not part of a new car dealership may be at risk.

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"Organized criminals are selling dangerous counterfeit and substandard airbags to consumers and suppliers with little to no regard to hazardous health and safety consequences," said ICE Director John Morton. "We will continue to aggressively investigate criminal supply chains with our law enforcement and private industry partners and bring these criminals to justice."

Consumers who believe they may be at risk should contact the call center that has been established by their auto manufacturer to have their vehicle inspected at their own expense and their air bag replaced if necessary. The full list of call centers and additional information is available at [www.SaferCar.gov](http://www.SaferCar.gov).

"Anytime equipment that is critical to protecting drivers and passengers fails to operate properly, it is a serious safety concern," said Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood. "We want consumers to be immediately aware of this problem and to review our safety information to see if their vehicle could be in need of inspection."

NHTSA has been working with a number of government agencies – including ICE, CBP, and the Intellectual Property Rights Coordination Center (IPR Center) to better understand the issue of counterfeit air bags and how to prevent them from being purchased and installed in vehicles.

"We expect all motor vehicle equipment to meet federal safety standards – and air bags in particular play a central role in keeping drivers and passengers safe in the event of a crash," said NHTSA Administrator David Strickland. "That's why it's critical that vehicle owners work with their automotive dealers and repair professionals to ensure they use the appropriate, original equipment parts in the event they need to replace their bag."

The IPR Center, who assisted in the investigations, is one of the U.S. government's key weapons in the fight against criminal counterfeiting, piracy and commercial fraud. As a task force, the IPR Center uses the expertise of its 21-member agencies to share information, develop initiatives, coordinate enforcement actions and conduct investigations related to IP theft and commercial fraud. Through this strategic interagency partnership, the IPR Center protects the public's health and safety, the U.S. economy and our war fighters. For more information on the IPR Center please visit [www.IPRCenter.gov](http://www.IPRCenter.gov).

## REPORTING & INFORMATION

To report IP theft or to learn more about the IPR Center, visit [IPRCenter.gov](http://IPRCenter.gov).

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