

RiskTopic

Vehicle recalls: Is your fleet at risk? August 2016

Anyone who has had to watch their car get towed away, or has spent hours haggling with a mechanic over costly repairs, knows that no car is perfect. But when there's a serious safety issue affecting an entire model of vehicle, the situation can go from aggravating to potentially dangerous.

Introduction

Tens of millions of vehicles are affected by product recalls every year, addressing serious safety issues like faulty throttles, malfunctioning airbags and other defects that might put a vehicle's occupants at serious risk. In 2014 alone, over 900 recalls were conducted in the U.S., with over 74 million vehicles affected.¹ The issue has gained more media attention following some of the largest recalls, including tragic stories of individuals being seriously injured or killed as a result of these line-wide defects.

Vehicle recalls clearly impact a large number of vehicles. But what about your own company's fleet? What if your employees are driving vehicles with outstanding recalls? What could happen if one of your employees is injured (or worse) due to a recall-related defect?

As an employer, you have a responsibility to care about the safety of your employees. It makes sense that if you're providing a vehicle for an employee's use, you'll want to make sure you're not putting that person's safety in jeopardy by letting the individual drive a vehicle with a serious safety issue. One critical and often overlooked method of helping to ensure employee-driver safety is monitoring vehicle recalls.

Discussion

Leased vehicles

If your vehicles are leased through a third party, recalls may already be tracked and acted upon by the leasing company. This may be especially likely in situations where full vehicle maintenance is performed by the lessor.

As the fleet operator, you should reach out to your leasing company and find out whether or not they track recalls. If not, you should develop your own monitoring program. If the leasing company does track recalls, it's still a good idea to regularly check in with them to determine if any recalls have been noted and to confirm that the affected vehicles have been addressed. This can be done monthly or quarterly and it should be documented.

Owned vehicles

If you are the fleet owner, then it's your responsibility to monitor any recalls on your fleet. Here are some tips to consider when creating your own monitoring program.

A straightforward way of monitoring recalls is to identify which makes, models and model years are in your fleet. If you have a large number of vehicles of the same make, model and year, then you will be able to check each set at the same time to determine which recalls have been placed for that group.

There are a number of websites where you can find recall information. Your local regional safety association or regulatory body are typically good places to check. A few other sources for recall information are provided at the end of this RiskTopic.

For every vehicle you have, it's important to record whether there have been any recalls and, if so, the date that the vehicle was brought in to have the recall issue addressed. A copy of the work order or repair bill should be retained as well to support that the repair was made in case of a subsequent related issue. As with leased vehicles, this process should be performed monthly or quarterly, as well as any time a vehicle is added to the fleet.

Other recalls

Vehicles themselves aren't the only item subject to recall. Other items equipped to or attached to your vehicles could also be found to have defects requiring immediate attention. Consider expanding your recall monitoring program to include parts and aftermarket accessories such as tires, heating units, seat heaters and so on. Any trailers being used by your fleet should also be monitored for recalls. If your vehicles have any specialized features (for example, wheelchair lifts), consider incorporating those items into your recall monitoring program as well.

Resources

Your vehicles' manufacturers should be the most accurate source for product recall details. In addition, here are some online resources that compile information about recalls that may be relevant to your vehicles:

- U.S./North America: <http://www.safercar.gov/>
- Canada: <http://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/motorvehiclesafety/safevehicles-defectinvestigations-index-76.htm>

- UK: <http://www.vosa.gov.uk/vosa/apps/recalls/>
- Australia: <https://www.recalls.gov.au/>
- Global (all products): <http://globalrecalls.oecd.org/>

References

¹ safercar.gov. 2014 Annual Recalls Report. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.
<http://www.safercar.gov/staticfiles/safercar/pdf/2014-annual-recalls-report.pdf>

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