



# Memorandum

U.S. Department of  
Transportation  
Office of the Secretary  
of Transportation  
Office of Inspector General

Subject: **INFORMATION**: Audit Announcement –  
Audit of NHTSA’s Vehicle Safety Recall Process  
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration  
Project No. 17S3002S000

Date: February 8, 2017

From: Barry J. DeWeese   
Assistant Inspector General  
for Surface Transportation Audits

Reply to JA-30  
Attn of:

To: National Highway Traffic Safety Administrator

In October 2008, auto manufacturers began recalling vehicles equipped with airbags manufactured by TK Holdings Inc. (Takata) for a defective inflator that could deploy improperly in the event of a crash and severely injure vehicle passengers with metal shrapnel. To date, 11 fatalities and approximately 180 injuries have been linked to defective Takata airbags in the United States. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s (NHTSA) Office of Defects Investigation (ODI) is responsible for overseeing safety recall campaigns and monitoring recall completion rates to assess campaign effectiveness. ODI oversaw the recall of roughly 170 million vehicles from 2011 through 2015, including the recall of vehicles with defective Takata airbags. The Takata airbag recall grew from an estimated 3 million defective airbags in April 2013 to an estimated 69 million defective airbags in May 2016.

In December 2015, Congress passed the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act,<sup>1</sup> which mandated that our office audit ODI’s recall processes. The mandate stems from congressional concerns over NHTSA’s handling of the Takata airbag recall. Consistent with this mandate, we are initiating an audit to assess NHTSA’s processes for (1) monitoring manufacturers’ proposed recall remedies and scope and (2) overseeing safety recall implementation, including the sufficiency of recall completion rates.

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<sup>1</sup>Pub. L. No. 114-94.

We plan to begin the audit this month and will contact your audit liaison to schedule an entrance conference. The audit will take place at DOT Headquarters and other sites as needed. If you have any questions, please contact me at (202) 366-5630.

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cc: DOT Audit Liaison, M-1  
NHTSA Audit Liaison, NPO-310