



**U.S. Department of  
Transportation**

Office of the Secretary  
of Transportation

**The Inspector General**

Office of Inspector General  
Washington, DC 20590

Statement of the Inspector General Calvin L. Scovel III, on the Secretary's  
Request to Undertake a Review of NHTSA's Oversight of the GM Recalls

Friday, March 21, 2014

We appreciate the Secretary's March 21, 2014 request asking the Department of Transportation Office of Inspector General to undertake a review of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) safety functions and processes related to the General Motors' recall. We will be taking the Secretary's request into account as we will build on our previous reviews of NHTSA's oversight of vehicle safety, most recently in our October 2011 report - [Process Improvements Are Needed for Identifying and Addressing Vehicle Safety Defects](#).

Our office stands committed to working with Congress and Secretary Foxx in reviewing NHTSA's programs and identifying opportunities to enhance its oversight and performance. I share the Secretary's commitment to ensuring that safety remains the Department's top priority for consumers and the protection of those who travel on our Nation's roadways.

DOT OIG's prior related work:

[Process Improvements Are Needed for Identifying and Addressing Vehicle Safety Defects](#)  
(October 6, 2011)

[Letter to Chairmen Rockefeller and Pryor Regarding Whether Former NHTSA Employees Exerted Undue Influence on Safety Defect Investigations](#) (April 4, 2011)

[Follow-up Audit on NHTSA's Office of Defects Investigation](#) (September 23, 2004)

[NHTSA Office of Defects Investigation](#) (January 3, 2002)

For more information, please visit our web site: [DOT, Office of Inspector General](#)

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## THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION

WASHINGTON, DC 20590

### MEMORANDUM TO THE INSPECTOR GENERAL

**TO:** Calvin L. Scovel III

**FROM:** Anthony R. Foxx 

**DATE:** March 21, 2014

**RE:** GM Recall – Request for Audit

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On February 7, 2014, General Motors LLC (GM) notified NHTSA that it had determined that a defect which relates to motor vehicle safety exists in more than 600,000 model year (MY) 2005-07 Chevrolet Cobalt and MY 2007 Pontiac G5 vehicles. GM expanded the recall on February 25, 2014, to cover additional models/model year vehicles (MY 2006-07 Chevrolet HHR and Pontiac Solstice, MY 2003-07 Saturn Ion and MY 2007 Saturn Sky vehicles), increasing the total number of vehicles subject to recall to 1,367,146. The safety defect concerns a condition in which an affected vehicle's ignition switch may unintentionally move from the "run" position to the "accessory" or "off" position resulting in a loss of power. This defect may result in airbags not deploying as they are designed to do in the event of an accident.

On March 4, 2014, NHTSA issued a Special Order Directed to GM, initiating a Timeliness Query to evaluate the timing of GM's defect decision making and reporting of the safety defect to NHTSA. NHTSA has directed GM to respond to the Special Order by April 3.

In addition to NHTSA's investigation of GM and oversight of the GM recalls (including steps to evaluate airbag non-deployment issues associated with the Cobalt and Ion), NHTSA has received numerous requests from Congress, the public and the press asking whether NHTSA acted in an expeditious and timely manner to identify and pursue the safety defects covered by the GM recalls and whether NHTSA had and currently has sufficient resources, processes and data available to it to fulfill its safety function with respect to this recall. At the present time, we are not aware of any information to suggest that NHTSA failed to properly carry out its safety mission based on the data available to it and the processes it followed. Nonetheless, in an abundance of caution, I have directed NHTSA and the Office of the General Counsel to jointly and collaboratively conduct an internal, due diligence review to evaluate these questions (and any related questions that arise during the course of the review.) In addition, I request that you initiate an audit to assess these issues as they pertain to the GM recall for the period 2003 until the February 7, 2014 (the date of the initial GM recall).<sup>1</sup> An audit by your office will ensure that DOT and NHTSA have a full understanding of the facts regarding the GM recall and can take corrective actions to enhance NHTSA's safety function to the extent necessary and appropriate.

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<sup>1</sup>I note that the Office of the Inspector General conducted an audit of NHTSA's Office of Defects Investigation for Toyota that covered much of this time period and that NHTSA has acted to implement the process improvements identified in the report. See "Process Improvements Are Needed for Identifying and Addressing Vehicle Safety Defects," Report No. MH-2012-001 (Oct. 6, 2011).