



**Statement of Clarence Ditlow, Executive Director Center for Auto Safety
Victims Press Conference on GM Ignition Defect - April 1, 2014**

General Motors hid the problem for years, NHTSA ignored obvious warning signs and people needlessly died in crashes because of defective decision making by both GM and the federal government. This reveals a complete failure of the recall system that cost countless people their lives. While GM bears complete responsibility for putting these vehicle on the road in 2002 with a known defect and then failing to recall these vehicles by 2004, when the body count started to rise, NHTSA has responsibility for failing to order a recall by early 2007.

Any good engineer testing these switches would realize it's too easy for the ignition to move from on to accessory. GM engineers recognized that defect in 2001 but management put the switch into production and people died. When the switch started killing people, management rejected a change and people died. Lawsuits that resulted were settled with confidentiality agreement.

NHTSA either missed or ignored the evidence of a defect and overruled engineers who wanted to open an investigation. For NHTSA to say it doesn't know how an advanced airbag system that it mandated works is an admission of incompetency. Instead of opening an investigation into a defect in 2007 when its engineers reported 29 complaints, 29 crashes, 25 injuries and 4 deaths, NHTSA began opening Equipment Queries (EQs) into defects in items of vehicle equipment to generate hundreds of redundant recalls by equipment installers. A classic case is EQ10-007 which was opened based on an equipment recall (10E-038) by Webasto of aftermarket sun roofs that separated from the vehicle in travel. This single investigation generated 111 vehicle recalls where NHTSA sent a preprinted recall form to each company that installed the defective sun roofs to send back to NHTSA to generate the vehicle recall. Yet Webasto conducted the recall. A Ricon wheelchair lift investigation generated 123 recalls by companies, mainly conversion van manufacturers, who installed the lifts in their vehicles.

Instead of pursuing ignition switch defects that killed countless people, NHTSA pursued aftermarket sun roofs that killed no one. That's a failure of the recall system.

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