

GM Agrees to Pay \$900 Million in Ignition Switch Tragedy

GM has agreed to pay \$900 million in fines in order to avoid criminal prosecution over the deaths of customers who had ignition problems in certain Chevrolet Cobalts.

In an address that was transmitted to General Motors facilities around the world, GM CEO Mary Barra spoke from the Tech Center on Sept. 17 about the company's settlement with the U.S. Justice Department.

According to the *Associated Press*, the automaker will retain an independent monitor to review and assess its policies to ensure compliance with the agreement with the government, according to court papers released by U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara in Manhattan.

Besides the \$900 million forfeiture and the monitor, *AP* reported that the deal calls for two criminal charges to be dismissed if the company complies with terms of the agreement for three years. The \$900 million must be paid by Sept. 24. The two-count criminal information accuses GM of wire fraud and scheming to conceal material facts from a government regulator.

At the Tech Center televised event, Barra and Mark Reuss, GM executive vice president of Glob-



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GM CEO Mary Barra, from the Tech Center, spoke to GM employees around the world about the recent settlement made with the federal government.



GM recycles wastepaper from its Detroit headquarters at the RenCen.

It's Not Easy Being Green, But GM, Ford Are Doing It

When GM and Ford go green, it doesn't mean they're Michigan State fans.

It just means they're focusing on being more environmentally friendly.

General Motors, for example, was just named to the Dow Jones Sustainability Index, the leading global benchmark for corporate sustainability. GM is the only automaker to make the list in North America, said GM spokeswoman Sharon Basel.

Launched in 1999, the Dow Jones Sustainability Indices annually assess companies for environmental, economic and social sustainability performance and disclosure.

The sustainability investment firm of RobecoSAM identifies companies that are named to the Dow Jones Index for being the best equipped for long-term success measured against sustainability risks and oppor-

tunities, said Basel.

More than 1,800 global companies were analyzed this year. GM received top scores in climate strategy and operational eco-efficiency, and a perfect score in environmental policy and management.

"We're on a mission to transform transportation, from designing more efficient vehicles to redefining how they're built to reduce environmental impact," said Greg Martin, executive director of Global Public Policy. "These efforts allow us to deliver top-line vehicles to customers and bottom-line benefits to investors."

GM generated \$2.5 billion in revenue through various recycling activities from 2007 to 2010 and now counts about \$1 billion in byproduct reuse and recycling revenue annually, Basel said. The

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GM Employee Volunteers Make Difference

Part of being a member of a community is lending a helping hand, and that's just what GM employees recently did.

From packing boxes at food banks to delivering gifts to children's hospitals and cleaning up neighborhoods, more than 1,900 General Motors' employee volunteers have started to participate in nearly 100 community service projects across the U.S.

The effort is part of the company's fourth annual "teamGM Cares Week," which began Sept. 14, said GM Foundation spokeswoman Genna Young.

"Our employees are passionate about giving back year round, both in dollars and time," said

Heidi Magyar, director of GM Community Outreach Programs. "teamGM Cares Week is an annual opportunity for us to rally together in support of the communities across the country in which we live and work."

GM employees participated in service projects in communities across the country, including Detroit, home of the company's global headquarters, Magyar said.

"I am always grateful for the incredible support we receive from our corporate supporters, especially during teamGM Cares Week," said Mike Khoury, president of Detroit Cristo Rey High School and participant in the

Southwest Detroit Junction Street effort, where more than 170 GM employees will be joined by local businesses and community groups to remove blight, garbage and graffiti.

"It has served as a shining example of what happens when businesses and community members join together and commit to a cause," Khoury said.

Other highlight events include:

- Arizona - Sept. 14: Nearly 100 employees from GM's IT Innovation Center in Chandler, Ariz., will stuff toy bears at Build-A-Bear and spend a day delivering them to children at Cardon

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GM employees help build Little Free Libraries at New Center Park in Detroit.

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Menards Set To Open Mega Store On Van Dyke

After more than a year of preparation, a Menards Mega Store will open up in Warren on Tuesday, Sept. 22.

The new store is located at 32501 Van Dyke Avenue, south of 14 Mile Road.

"We appreciate all the hard work and dedication from everyone involved with the building of this huge store in Warren," said Jeff Abbott, Menards spokesperson.

"Homeowners, tenants, business owners and contractors will now have greater access to a full line of building materials and supplies at the lowest prices in the area."

Abbott said that Menards is well-known throughout the Midwest for its complete selection of high-quality, name brand merchandise, tools for any job and state-of-the-art in-store computers to help customers design their special projects. Opening up a store in the city of Warren made sense, he said.

"This is a really nice community and the opportunity to open a new home improvement store is very much appreciated," said Jeremy Troke, Warren Menards general manager. "There is a lot of excitement in the area and we're looking forward to opening the doors to the public on Tuesday."

With home improvement at the forefront of today's do-it-yourself market, Abbott said Menards provides a valuable resource for the entire community.

Menards, Abbot said, creates employment opportunities and economic growth in the communities in which its stores are located, while, at the same time, fulfilling the various home improvement needs of local homeowners, tenants, and business owners.

The company, Abbott said, is a family-owned business that started in 1958. Menards currently operates 292 home improvement stores located throughout 14 Midwestern states, including 26 in the state of Michigan – with five located in the Detroit market.

A sixth Menards store, Abbott said, is getting ready to open up in the Detroit market later in the fall.

General Motors Foundation Supports Hispanic Groups

The General Motors Foundation has awarded grants totaling \$1 million to fund Hispanic education and science, technology, engineering and math initiatives to help empower young Latinos to join the workforce of the future.

Grace Lieblein, General Motors vice president of Global Quality, announced the grants during a press conference at the National Press Club on Sept. 10, where she was joined by GM Foundation vice president Lori Wingerter; chief diversity officer Ken Barrett; U.S. Rep. Tony Cárdenas, D-Calif.; and representatives from several Hispanic organizations.

"Hispanics represent an important facet of our business as the next generation of leaders and innovators, and also our customers," Lieblein said. "At GM, we want to help fund vital programs aimed at increasing opportunities for Latinos to pursue STEM careers and strengthen their skills to compete for jobs."

The grants, said GM spokesman Patrick Hernandez, benefit the nation's leading Hispanic organizations, including the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute (CHCI), the Hispanic Association on Corporate Responsibility (HACR), the United States Hispanic Leadership Institute (USHLI), the Congressional Hispanic Leadership Institute (CHLI) and Service Employment Redevelopment (SER) National.

Cárdenas, who represents California's San Fernando Valley, said the grants will help increase the small number of Latino STEM graduates from U.S. colleges, helping to put more Americans into the family-wage jobs of the future.

"As the President has said, America can only succeed when we are playing with a full team. That means ensuring that everyone in our country has a great chance to not only learn, but also to succeed," he said.

For decades, GM and its philanthropic foundation have donated hundreds of millions of dollars to organizations across the country and around the world, Hernandez said. These grants focus on advancing access to education through programs such as the Buick Achievers Scholarship, one of the largest programs of its kind in the country.

"We recognize the increasing importance of investing in the education and empowerment of Hispanic youth," said Wingerter. "Through these grants, we hope to make a lasting difference in their lives and in their communities."

Nineteen leading Hispanic groups will receive grants to fund programs focused on STEM education, including:

- League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) – will expand its Empower Hispanic America with Technology (EHAT) initiative, which provides access to state-of-the-art technologies in



The GM Foundation has awarded \$1 million to a variety of Hispanic groups.

60 Hispanic communities across the United States. The centers will provide STEM-related student support services to five EHAT sites to help improve high school STEM achievement among Hispanic youth.

- National Council of La Raza (NCLR) – As part of its Special Initiative, NCLR will develop a new component within its successful Lideres program, facilitating professional development opportunities for 18-to-24-year-old Latinos and helping students gain leadership skills required for midlevel positions in both the nonprofit and for-profit sectors.

- Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute (CHCI) – will invest in planning and capacity to build scalable and sustainable models to prepare for dynamic population growth and need associated with the prediction that Latinos will comprise one-quarter of the U.S. population by 2030.

- United States Hispanic Leadership Institute (USHLI) – USHLI will develop a school-based project for economically disadvantaged students at underserved schools and engaging the community in four predominantly Latino communities. Prominent Latino experts in STEM-related fields from similarly disadvan-

tagged backgrounds will help promote a greater understanding of STEM-related studies, practical uses and employment/career opportunities.

- Hispanic Association on Corporate Responsibility (HACR) – HACR will focus on the HACR STEM Initiative, business sessions focusing on education, recruitment, retention, and Latinas in STEM. The initiative was created to understand the mechanisms that lead to lower participation in STEM fields for Hispanics and to identify barriers to successful careers for those Hispanics in the STEM pipeline.

- SER National – SER National will focus on an early education model to respond to the unique needs of young linguistically and culturally diverse youth and their families. The primary goal is to advance early development and dual language learning of young children, preparing them for achievement in school, higher learning, economic well-being and participation in civil society.

Additional Hispanic organizations receiving funding include:

- American GI Forum (AGIF)
- ASPIRA;
- Cuban American National Council, Nurturing Hispanic Communities (CNC);
- Congressional Hispanic Leadership Institute (CHLI);
- Great Minds in Stem (GMiS), formerly known as Hispanic Engineer National Achievement Awards Corporation (HENAAC);
- Hispanic Association of Colleges & Universities (HACU);
- Hispanic Heritage Foundation (HHF);
- Hispanic Scholarship Fund (HSF);
- Latin Americans for Social & Economic Development (LA SED);
- LULAC National Education Service Centers (LNESEC);
- MANA, A National Latina Organization;
- National Puerto Rican Coalition (NPRC);
- Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE).

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GM to Pay \$900 Million Fine For Ignition Switch Tragedy

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al Product Development, Purchasing and Supply Chain, spoke to employees worldwide about the agreement and where GM goes next.

Barra said, "Today, the government is announcing an agreement that resolves that investigation, and I felt it was important that we have an all-employee meeting to discuss what's happening - just as we did 15 months ago, when I shared the findings of the Valukas Report.

"Before I talk about the settlement agreement, let's pause for a moment and remember that people were hurt and people died in our cars. That's why we're here.

"I have said many times how sorry I am for what happened. On behalf of all of us, I have apologized to the families who lost love ones and to those who were injured. I do so again today.

"We let these customers down in this situation. We didn't do our jobs. As part of our apology to the victims, we promised to take responsibility for our actions.

"So, we accept the penalties being announced today because they are part of being held accountable."

Barra said the centerpiece of the deal with the government is its "Deferred Prosecution Agreement" in which the government defers prosecution of charges against GM for three years.

"After three years, if we meet all of the terms and conditions set by the government, federal prosecutors will seek to dismiss all of the charges and the matter will be completely closed," Barra said.

GM's obligations under the agreement, Barra said, include:

- GM to continue cooperating with the federal government and obey all laws;
- GM to work with the government to establish an independent monitor to review and assess its policies and procedures in specific areas relating to safety issues and recalls;
- GM to pay a \$900 million financial penalty.

"This is a tough agreement. It further highlights the mistakes that were made by certain people in GM, and it imposes significant penalties and obligations. Make no mistake - we are committed to honor the obligations," Barra said.

Reuss said that while the settlement is tough on GM, "we must remember that it was devastating for people who bought our cars."

Reuss went on to say that GM must never forget what happened with the ignition switch tragedy, nor should anyone at the company want to.

"You can put it in the mirror and go forward," Reuss said, "but always see it back there. And remember - it's closer than it appears."

Reuss said he's proud of the

progress GM has made but still has much work to do.

"When you make mistakes, you accept them, you correct the situation and you take the necessary steps to make sure you never make the same mistakes again," Reuss said.

That's why GM has reorganized its engineering departments for greater transparency and accountability. The improvements that GM will make in the future can only be done with the help of its employees, Reuss said.

"I have said many times I wish I



Mary Barra



Mark Reuss

could turn back the clock," Barra said. "If I could, I would do so in a heartbeat. But I can't. What we

can do is make sure we respond the right way. We have done that, and we will continue to do so."

GM Employee Volunteers Make Difference

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Children's Medical Center.

• Michigan - Sept. 14-18: 673 employees will have led 17 projects at the Gleaners Community Food Bank's Warren, Detroit and Pontiac distribution centers.

Sept. 16-18: 187 employees will have helped pack family food boxes at Forgotten Harvest's Oak Park warehouse and harvest vegetables at the organization's farm in Fenton.

Sept. 14-18: 173 volunteers will have participated in 18 projects at Grace Centers of Hope in Pontiac ranging from home rebuilds, lot clean-ups, painting, gardening and child care.

• Ohio - Sept. 17: Employee

volunteers from GM's Parma Metal Center will have spent time at the Greater Cleveland Food Bank.

• Tennessee - Sept. 16: More than 30 employees from GM's Spring Hill Assembly Plant will have participated in a volunteer build activity with Habitat for Humanity.

• Texas - Sept. 15: Volunteers from GM's IT Innovation Center in Austin will have prepared and served breakfast and lunch for families at the Ronald McDonald House in Austin.

Throughout the year, thousands of teamGM Cares Volunteers participate in numerous projects and dedicate their time and resources to many different charitable organizations and

causes across the United States, Young said.

In August, 3,400 Detroit-area GM employees participated in cleanup efforts in Detroit's Osborn neighborhood with Life Remodeled.

Employees mentor youth, conduct food drives, participate in charity home-building projects and assist with disaster relief efforts and more.

As an added incentive through the company's "Dollars for Diners" program, the General Motors Foundation provides a \$200 grant per year to eligible nonprofits each time an employee or employee team contributes 50 hours of service to the organization.

Library to Help Families Explore Their Roots

October will be a busy month for the Warren Public Library wishing to honor family and friends. Librarian Jennifer Lund said that the library is holding a special meeting to celebrate Family History Month.

Those who attend can learn to explore their roots using the new and improved Heritage Quest website now owned by Ancestry.com.

Attendees will also learn how to use information available for use in the library or their homes, as well as how to search the complete U.S. federal census (1790-1940). Also covered will be tips and tricks for beginners, the Ancestry Library Edition database, and valuable free websites that will jumpstart the search into a family's past. The event is scheduled for Thursday, Oct. 8, at 6 p.m. at the Civic Center Conference Center.

For the more whimsical, the library is holding a class on Thursday, Oct. 15, at 6 p.m. in the Warren Civic Center branch on how to create, for Sweetest Day, "charming and tasty candy bouquets for that special someone in your life," Lundy said.

Cost is \$5 for the class to help pay for bouquet supplies.

Space at both events is limited, so Lundy said that anyone interested in attending either one should call 586-574-4564 to reserve a spot.

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FCA and UAW Reach Tentative Agreement

by TOM KRISHER and DEE-ANN DURBIN
AP Auto Writers

DETROIT (AP) – A tentative contract agreement reached late in the day on Sept. 15 between the United Auto Workers and Fiat Chrysler addresses pay and health care issues, but neither side would give specifics about the pact.

The Italian-American company and union announced the accord covering about 40,000 workers nationwide after a furious and almost continuous 48 hours of bargaining. It will serve as a template for Fiat Chrysler's Detroit counterparts, General Motors and Ford, both of which are operating on contract extensions.

But UAW President Dennis Williams made it clear that he would treat the other two differently because they are more prosperous.

Union officials still must be briefed on the four-year package, then the full membership will vote on it.

At a hastily called news conference after the deal was announced early in the evening of Sept. 15, Williams said the agreement meets the union's goals but still keeps Fiat Chrysler competitive with other automakers. He told reporters he had three goals for the contract: giving entry-level workers a path to higher pay, rewarding members for sacrifices they made while Fiat Chrysler struggled financially, and dealing with escalating health care costs.

"We believe that we have met those goals, but ultimately our membership will make the final decision," Williams said.

The union was seeking hourly pay raises for longtime workers who haven't had one in a decade.

It also wanted to narrow or close the wage gap for new hires, who start at about half the \$29 per hour that longtime workers are paid.

The UAW agreed to the two tiers of pay when then-Chrysler was near bankruptcy in 2007. But Fiat Chrysler CEO Sergio Marchionne agreed with the UAW that tiered wages were unfair to workers. Marchionne said negotiators came up with a carefully crafted agreement "whereby that issue will go away." But he wouldn't give further details.

The UAW began bargaining in July with Ford, GM and Fiat Chrysler. Contracts with all three companies – which cover around 140,000 U.S. hourly workers – expired Monday night but were extended while talks continued.

Fiat Chrysler, or FCA, was picked as the lead company in the talks this year, making it the focus of bargaining and a potential strike target if talks hit a snag.

The deal with FCA came after two days of talks that included an all-night session from Sept. 14 to Sept. 15. Both sides had agreed to extend the contract on an hour-by-hour basis while talks continued, even as some members called for an end to talks and a strike at FCA plants.

The main issue in the talks was pay raises. The current wage gap between entry-level workers and veteran employees benefits FCA the most, since 45 percent of its hourly workers make entry-level wages. Only around 20 percent of workers at Ford and GM make the lower wage. Fiat Chrysler had no cap on the number of entry-level workers it could hire, but that was to be negotiated in the contract talks.

Marchionne has been outspoken about wanting to eliminate

the wage gap. But he has indicated the top wages should come down in favor of fatter profit-sharing checks. Over the past four years, FCA workers have gotten annual profit-sharing checks totaling \$9,000 per worker.

The union is also seeking guarantees from all three automakers that new vehicles will be built in U.S. factories and not in Mexico, where companies have been moving some of their production.

While the agreement will serve as a pattern for pacts with Ford and GM, there are significant differences in the companies. Ford and GM are larger and make more money. Also, FCA is the only one of the Detroit Three whose U.S. labor costs are lower than foreign competitors like Toyota; Ford and GM think that's an unfair advantage and want to be on par with FCA.

Williams said some parts of the deal will transfer to Ford and GM, but some financial provisions will be different.

"It's about whether or not the company has a greater ability to pay," he said. "I don't want people to think for one minute that I'm not looking at the other companies and the amount of money that they have made," Williams said.

To fund some of the union demands, Williams has proposed a giant health care pool to save money for the union and the three companies. Currently, a union-run trust pays most health insurance costs for about 600,000 retirees and their spouses, and the companies fund health care for about 551,000 hourly and salaried workers and their families.

Neither would say if they agreed to set up a giant health care pool, but Marchionne said



Marchionne, left, and Williams agree on contract.

there are inefficiencies in the way they now run health care.

"We have an obligation to find a better way to manage this cost," he said.

Williams and Marchionne praised each other for a cooperative relationship during the talks.

The agreement came about 19 hours after the contract with FCA expired at 11:59 p.m. Sept. 14. Williams said union leaders will have to be briefed on the pact this week, and said he didn't expect a deal with GM or Ford this week.

Some Automakers Consider Making 'Vegan' Vehicles

by DEE-ANN DURBIN
AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) – Tesla Motors shareholders Mark Peters and Elizabeth Farrell Peters had a simple request for the electric-car maker at its annual meeting in June: Stop offering leather interiors and make Tesla the first "cruelty-free" premium brand.

Shareholders rejected the proposal after Tesla's board said it would delay production of its electric cars. But Tesla CEO Elon Musk seemed intrigued.

"We'll look into it," he said. Last month, the Peterses took delivery of a leather-free Tesla Model S, the second one in their Hurst, Texas, garage.

For car buyers like the Peterses – who have been vegans for more than two decades – leather-free choices are limited. The car-buying site Edmunds.com says 78 percent of 2015 model-year vehicles have standard leather seats on at least one trim level. In other words, buyers content with basic models can get cloth seats and plastic steering wheels, but as they add options like better engines, heated seats or upgraded speakers, they usually have to add leather seats.

Edmunds says 79 vehicles in the 2015 model year don't require buyers to get leather at any trim level. Those include the Toyota Prius hybrid, the BMW 3 Series and the Volkswagen Jetta. But even some models with cloth or faux-leather seats – like the plug-in hybrid Chevrolet Volt – still have leather-wrapped steering wheels.

That's not likely to change any time soon. Most customers worldwide equate leather with quality, richness and comfort, says Mel Stephens, a spokesman for automotive seat-maker Lear Corp.

"Vinyl is good, but leather is better," he said. "People like natural materials."

Luxury automakers, including Audi and Cadillac, say requests for non-leather interiors are rare. Even when they get them, high-volume automakers can't necessarily stop the assembly line and make a personalized car. Ford won't replace leather seats at the factory, for example, but says dealers can install different seats if a customer requests them.

David Peters of DLP Advisors, a leather-industry consulting firm, forecasts continued growth in automotive leather over the next decade as luxury car sales increase worldwide, particularly in China. Automakers used around 2 billion square feet of leather in 2014, or around 45 million cow hides; that was 17 percent of the global supply of hides. By 2025, that could grow to 25 percent, Peters said.

A vehicle interior usually requires two or three hides; some high-end luxury vehicles, like the Rolls Royce Phantom, use as many as nine.

Environmentalists and animal rights groups say leather tanneries pollute land and water with chemicals like chromium, which the U.S. government classifies as a carcinogen. Raising, processing and transporting livestock also accounts for an estimated 14.5 percent of all greenhouse gas emissions, according to a 2013 report by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization.

Elizabeth Farrell Peters, 42, a dental hygienist and yoga instructor, became a vegetarian as a teen – and later a vegan – after growing up on a veal farm. Her husband, an airline pilot, became concerned about the inhumane treatment of animals after a visit to a slaughterhouse when he was 12. Mark Peters, 51, became a vegan in the early 1990s.

"You have to be honest about what you learn and what you know," he said. "If you put your blinders on, that makes you partially responsible."

Mark Peters was driving a BMW 3 Series with faux-leather seats when he decided to look at a Tesla Model S because he wanted an electric car. Tesla offers cloth seats on case models, but he was annoyed by the standard leather-wrapped steering wheel and the fact that he couldn't get options like heated seats without upgrading to leather. He contacted Tesla in 2012; after a little haggling, the company promised him the non-leather options he wanted at no extra cost, including a hand-built, non-leather steering wheel. He got the car in June 2013.

"When we buy something, we vote with our dollars," Mark Peters said.

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It's Not Easy Being Green, But GM, Ford Are Doing It

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

company has saved more than \$196 million in energy costs through the voluntary energy-reduction challenge set by the U.S. EPA and \$70 million in renewable energy investments.

Earlier this year, GM earned 2015 ENERGY STAR Partner of the Year award for Sustained Excellence, the highest recognition a corporation can receive from the EPA for superior energy efficiency.

In July, GM joined a dozen other companies to launch the White House's American Business Act on Climate Pledge, a commitment to address climate change through \$140 billion in new low-carbon investments and more than 1,600 megawatts of new renewable energy collectively, Basel said.

GM wasn't the only automaker to see the business wisdom of going green. Ford recently declared that its Research & Engineering Center is now landfill-free, said Ford spokesman John Cangany. This action is helping the auto-maker achieve its goal to trim global waste-to-landfill by 40 percent per vehicle produced from 2011 to 2016.

The R&E Center sits on 720 acres in Dearborn near Ford World Headquarters. With more than 12,000 employees working out of 34 buildings – including research labs, design studios, and a major data center, the campus is much like a small city, Cangany said. Paring waste streams will allow Ford to be more efficient while helping to improve the environment.

"Our global waste strategy commits Ford to reducing waste-to-landfill, and we have made

great progress at our manufacturing plants," said Andy Hobbs, Ford's director of the Environmental Quality Office.

"We are now extending this effort to our office and research facilities, and are proud to recognize the Research & Engineering Center for sending zero waste to landfill."

The nearly three-year effort to achieve landfill-free status started by identifying various waste streams and categorizing them from smallest to largest. Waste managers and environmental engineers then worked to find creative solutions to avoid using landfills while not incurring additional cost to manage the waste. The move also included recycling training for campus employees. The Research & Engineering Center houses test operations – including a test track, wind tunnels, crash sleds and dynamometers.

The campus now diverts 230,000 pounds of waste from landfills annually, Cangany said. Ford has reduced the amount of global waste sent to landfills by 50 percent per vehicle over the last five years.

Thirty Ford facilities no longer send any waste to landfills, Cangany said. This includes all Canadian and Mexican manufacturing plants. The company is working to shrink greenhouse gas emissions from manufacturing facilities by 30 percent per vehicle between 2010 and 2025.

Ford eased global water use by 30 percent per vehicle from a 2009 baseline – reaching its goal two years ahead of schedule, Cangany said.

Since 2011, Ford has been working to trim energy consumption by 25 percent by 2016.

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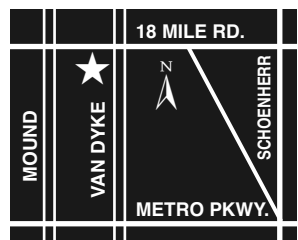
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Automakers Struggle with Safety, Privacy Concerns

WASHINGTON (AP) – Ten automakers have committed to the government and a private safety group that they will include automatic emergency braking in all new cars, a step transportation officials say could significantly reduce traffic deaths and injuries.

But safety advocates were swift to criticize the effort as a backroom deal that allows automakers to avoid the possibility that the U.S. Transportation Department will impose a legal requirement for inclusion of the braking systems in cars and set binding standards for the technology.

Making the technology widely available is part of a new era in vehicle safety in which the focus is on preventing crashes rather than on protecting occupants from their effects, Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx said Sept. 11 in a statement announcing the commitments.

The announcement didn't specify a timetable for implementing the change. The automakers are Audi, BMW, Ford, General Motors, Mazda, Mercedes Benz, Tesla, Toyota, Volkswagen and Volvo. The manufacturers represented 57 percent of U.S. car and light truck sales in 2014.

The commitments were made to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, which regulates automakers, and the Insurance Institute for Auto Safety, an industry group that researches and promotes safety.

The technology is already available in some vehicles, but typically as an option in higher-priced models like Cadillac, Infiniti and Lexus.

It is also often bundled with other features like heated seats or faux leather interiors, making the overall package more expensive.

"If technologies such as automatic emergency braking are only available as options or on the most expensive models, too few Americans will see the benefits of this new era," Foxx said.

Automatic emergency braking includes a range of systems designed to address the cause of large number of crashes, especially rear-end crashes, in which drivers do not apply the brakes or fail to apply sufficient braking power to avoid or mitigate a crash.

The systems use on-vehicle sensors such as radar, cameras or lasers to detect an imminent

crash, warn the driver and, if the driver does not take sufficient action, engage the brakes.

The systems could prevent or mitigate an estimated 80 percent of the auto and commercial truck rear-end collisions that cause about 1,700 deaths and a half million injuries annually, according to a recent report by the U.S. National Transportation Safety Board.

There are about 1.7 million rear-end crashes each year in the U.S.

"This can't be voluntary," said Clarence Ditlow, executive director of the Center for Auto Safety. "This needs a mandated safety standard with rigorous performance measures that trigger a recall if an automaker doesn't meet them."

Only through the government rulemaking process will consumer groups have the opportunity "to raise the hard questions," such as if a type of braking system is capable of stopping a car going 25 mph, then why not 50 mph, which is closer to highway speeds, he said.

The traffic safety administration and the insurance institute said they will set specific performance criteria for manufacturers to meet their voluntary commitments, and will determine how soon consumers can expect to see the technology as standard equipment.

The commitments from automakers don't mean the government has taken the possibility of issuing regulations on the braking systems "off the table," Gordon Trowbridge, a spokesman for the traffic safety administration, said in an email.

"Today's announcement puts 10 automakers representing more than half of all light-duty vehicle sales on the record as committed to making (automatic braking) standard on all their vehicles, and we expect that will accelerate the availability of that technology beyond what could be accomplished through rulemaking that could take several years," he said.

The Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers, which represents most large automakers in many matters before the federal government, has opposed requiring that automatic braking be standard in all cars.

"Consumers should determine what vehicles they drive and what safety technology is in those vehicles," the alliance said in a statement.



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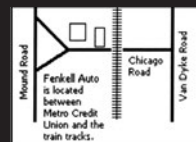
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GM to Pay \$575 Million to Settle 1,385 Civil Lawsuits

by TOM KRISHER
AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) – General Motors will pay \$575 million to settle hundreds of civil lawsuits filed against the company over faulty small-car ignition switches, including the bulk of pending wrongful death and injury cases.

The company, on Sept. 17, said it reached a deal with Texas personal injury lawyer Bob Hilliard to settle 1,385 death and injury cases that he filed over crashes caused by the switches.

The money also will be used to settle a 2014 class-action lawsuit filed by shareholders claiming that General Motors' actions reduced the value of the company's stock.

Neither General Motors nor Hilliard would say how much money was set aside for the death and injury claims, but Hilliard said the number was substantial and he is confident it's enough to settle all the lawsuits.

The announcement comes the same day that the U.S. Attorney's Office in Manhattan is to detail an agreement with General Motors to settle a criminal investigation into the switch case.

It will be a costly close to a sad chapter in the company's history. In addition to the \$575 million, General Motors has agreed to pay a \$900 million fine to the federal government to avoid prosecution on wire fraud charges.

With the settlements, General Motors is taking big steps toward moving past the ignition switch scandal, which tarnished the company's reputation, but also touched off a series of company-wide safety reforms designed to

prevent such incidents from happening in the future. General Motors' CEO Mary Barra appointed a new safety chief who reports directly to her and added 35 product safety investigators to its staff.

The company, in response to what happened over the ignition troubles, changed its product development process to focus more on safety and it started a program that encourages employees to speak up if they find a safety issue.

GM also reviewed a backlog of safety issues in 2014 and issued a record 84 recalls covering more than 30 million vehicles, including 27 million in the U.S.

By comparison, this year the company has issued 33 recalls covering 2.6 million cars and trucks.

In the wrongful death cases, Hilliard said a special master will be appointed to decide how much to offer each of the plaintiffs he represents.

Hilliard said the lawsuits include 45 deaths. Including 124 death cases settled previously by General Motors, that brings the number of deaths caused by the switches to 169. Hilliard estimates that number will rise to 250 by the time all cases are settled or tried.

Even with the settlements, another 454 death and injury cases remain as part of the consolidated federal court claims against GM.

Hilliard, one of the lead attorneys in the consolidated cases, said he is encouraging the company to set aside money to settle those as well. Six cases have been scheduled for trial, including a trial that is set to start beginning in January of 2016.



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Frankfurt Show Offers View of the Future

by DAVID McHUGH
AP Business Writer

FRANKFURT, Germany (AP) – A sense of impending disruption hangs over all the shiny new cars at this year's edition of the Frankfurt International Motor Show.

The potential impact of automated driving and of extensively connected cars has pushed aside electric and low-emission vehicles as the major theme in just the two years since the show was last held.

New technologies could lead to everything from real-time navigating around a slippery stretch of road, to eliminating the need for a home garage by having cars drive themselves to people who summon them through an app.

The big question among automakers is whether they will be the ones to provide new technologies – and profit from them – or will major tech companies like Google and Apple take a slice of the industry. For now, the two sides are balancing cooperation against competition as they gauge what the future holds.

General Motors CEO Mary Barra said that “we will see more change in the industry in the next five to ten years than we have in the last 50.”

Dieter Zetsche, the head of Daimler AG, described the car and technology companies as being “frenemies.” He said Daimler would welcome competition, which he called “the energy source for our economy.” What's important is for Daimler to keep control of customers' data, to not sell it to third parties, and to obey customer wishes on how it is used. That was his company's rationale for joining with Audi and BMW to buy Nokia's HERE mapping service: “To be sure we define the fate of the data being gathered.”

If Apple or Google start making cars – something neither has said they intend to do – “then we are competitors.”

Consultancy McKinsey found expectations of rapid change were widespread in the industry. In a survey of 91 industry executives for a report released Sept. 16, it found 90 percent “believe that their organization's business model will change or broaden because of connectivity and autonomous driving.”

The company also found that more car customers would be willing to switch brands for better connected services. The number that would do so rose from 20 percent in 2014 to 37 percent this year. The company surveyed over 1,000 recent car customers each in Germany, the U.S. and China. “The fact that within just one year the number of people willing to switch car brands for connectivity has almost doubled shows that connectivity is evolving from a should-have to a must-have” for carmakers.

More and more carmakers support the Android Auto and Apple CarPlay interfaces that let people use their smartphone apps, such as navigation or messaging, through their car's dashboard screen. Seven automakers had cars with Android Auto on display in Frankfurt: Audi, Hyundai, Mitsubishi, Volkswagen and its SEAT and Skoda brands, and Opel. General Motors has been connecting cars for years through its OnStar remote roadside assistance service, which it extended to its mass-market entrant in Europe.

Google had no stand at the show, but has shaken up the auto industry by testing a self-driving prototype. Traditional automakers such as Daimler's Mercedes-Benz, GM and Toyota are also working to gradually automate functions in the car until vehicles become fully capable of driving themselves, possibly by 2025.

A key issue is when some auto-

mated functions become legal, and in what countries. Some technologies – especially for cars that drive themselves – are already appearing on new models, but are held back by legal and safety concerns. BMW's new 7-Series sedan can park itself with the driver standing outside at the press of a remote button. Cars can already warn drivers when they're leaving their lane.

Daimler CEO Zetsche sketched out a transformative idea: “You could for instance, think about a typical American neighborhood where you would avoid building 100 garages, getting more houses in, and having the cars being parked outside and come on demand,” he said. “That is a relatively simple task and could be accomplished certainly within the next five years. ... It depends on the restrictions.”

According to Renault-Nissan CEO Carlos Ghosn, autonomous driving might come in stages as more functions are automated and different jurisdictions allow them. He cautioned, however, that someone will always be behind the wheel able to take over.

He also argued that tech companies would be an integral part of the car industry in the future. “We cannot develop this technology on our own.”

Google's engineering director in charge of Android Auto, Patrick Brady, attended the show for discussions with auto partners and said there was a convergence between the industries.

“We are partnering in so many different ways but there are other places where we are competing, and I think that's healthy,” he said. “The consumer ultimately wins.”

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