

Bolt Battery Problem Solved - GM

by Phil Foley

Following the largest EV recall to date – the entire 142,000 unit run of the Chevrolet Bolt – General Motors and its battery partner, LG, have announced they found a fix to the battery problem that's torched more than a dozen Chevrolet Bolts since November.

GM announced Sept. 20 that LG battery plants in Holland and Hazel Park have resumed production and replacement battery modules will begin shipping to dealers as soon as mid-October.

However, production at the Orion Township plant where the Bolt is assembled, remains on hold at least through Oct. 11 and no date has been set for resuming production. That leave 1,300 hourly and salaried employees idled for the time being.

Before the recall, Chevrolet has having its best year with the Bolt since its introduction in 2016 with first-quarter sales up 142% over the previous year.

A GM spokesman said defects within LG's battery cell manufacturing operations were discovered and GM experts worked with LG to eliminate them.

GM expects to launch a new advanced diagnostic software package within the next 60 days that will increase the available battery-charging parameters

over existing guidance.

The diagnostic software will be designed to detect specific abnormalities that might indicate a damaged battery in Bolt EVs and EUVs by monitoring the battery performance; alerting customers of any anomalies, and prioritizing

damaged battery modules for replacement.

This new software, which will be provided to all Bolt EV and EUV owners, requires dealer installation.

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Bolt production resumes at Orion Assembly.

photo: courtesy of GM

Manley Leaves Stellantis, To Head AutoNation

by COLLEEN BARRY and TOM KRISHER
Associated Press

MILAN (AP) – PSA Peugeot's takeover of Fiat Chrysler to form the world's fourth-largest carmaker has had its first executive casualty, with former Fiat Chrysler CEO Mike Manley stepping down from his role of head of the Americas.

Stellantis announced in late September that Manley, 57, was leaving to become CEO of the largest dealership network in the United States, AutoNation Inc., based in Florida. Manley will not be replaced, and Americas chief operating officer Antonio Filosa will report directly to Stellantis CEO Carlos Tavares.

Manley was named CEO of Fiat Chrysler in July 2018, coinciding with the illness and sudden death of long-time CEO Sergio Marchionne. When Stellantis was formed, Tavares, who was Peugeot's chief executive, took over as CEO of the combined carmaker.

Manley was credited with the turnaround of the Jeep subsidiary, which was a mainstay of FCA profits, and also was the long-time head of Fiat Chrysler's Asia operations. Manley is well-



Mike Manley

respected in the analyst community, lauded for his strong credentials to run a global automaker both in terms of technological and strategic transitions.

Manley is taking over a dealership group that posted more than \$20 billion in sales and \$382 million in net income last year. He starts Nov. 1, replacing Mike Jackson, an industry icon who has been with AutoNation for 22 years. Jackson retired in 2018, but was called out of retirement when his replacement left the company.

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GM Defense Wins \$36M Contract from State Department

by Phil Foley

At \$3.6 million a copy, this Chevrolet Suburban is not a "take your kids to soccer practice" vehicle – and they won't be showing up on dealer showroom floors anywhere.

GM's Concord, N.C.-based GM Defense LLC has been awarded a \$36.4 million contract to develop the next generation of Large Support Utility Commercial vehicles, based on the Suburban, for the U.S. State Department's Diplomatic Security Service.

GM Defense is expected to deliver 10 purpose-built Heavy-duty Suburbans to DSS, the state department's law enforcement arm, over the next two years.

They'll join the more than 4,600 SUVs already in use at the State Department service worldwide.

"We're excited to be developing a fully-integrated, purpose-built HD Suburban in partnership with the U.S. Department of State," Steve duMont, president of GM Defense said.

Following the development phase, the GM subsidiary, which was created in 2017, expects to get a production contract to produce 200 of the specialized Suburbans over a nine-year period beginning in 2023.

GM Defense delivered the first of 649 Infantry Squad Vehicles, based on the 2020 Chevrolet Colorado, last October – four months after being awarded the \$214.3 million contract.

The HD Suburban will feature a new and unique body-on-frame chassis and suspension, designed to specifically support increased government vehicle performance requirements with a higher payload capacity and

greater ground vehicle weight.

However, GM Defense will use significant commercial-off-the-shelf parts, including the body, exterior, propulsion, interior and brakes for their government, purpose-built HD Suburban.

"Our development contract win speaks to our long-standing legacy of exceeding transportation capabilities," said duMont, "and our new, HD Suburban will deliver government-specific advanced mobility solutions to meet the needs of DSS."

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GM designs new Suburban for U.S. Government.

rendering: GM

UAW Members to Vote on Election Options

by TOM KRISHER
AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) –The United Auto Workers union's 397,000 members will vote by mail this fall on whether they want to pick their leaders in direct elections.

In a posting on his website, union monitor Neil Barofsky says ballots will be mailed by an election vendor starting at 10 a.m. Oct. 12. They must be returned by 5 p.m. Nov. 12.

They'll be counted as soon as possible, and Barofsky will announce the results. The monitor laid out rules for the election, and the results must be approved by the Labor Department and a U.S. District Court Judge.

Barofsky was appointed by a federal judge earlier this year as part of a settlement that avoided a government takeover of the union after a wide-ranging corruption scandal. The vote on di-

rect election of leaders also was part of the settlement.

Currently, union leaders are chosen every four years at a convention, with the delegates picked by local union offices. But the new slate of leaders is picked by the outgoing president, and seldom is there serious opposition.

If members approve elections, then a vote on leadership will take place before June of next year.

The vote and monitor are part of a December deal between former UAW President Rory Gamble and ex-U.S. Attorney Matthew Schneider in Detroit that held off moves by the government to take over the union.

Schneider viewed direct elections as a way to hold union leaders accountable for their actions.

But Gamble, who retired June 30, said in an interview at the time direct elections would let

anti-union groups to put out disinformation. Plus, he said the delegate system gives minorities, women and members outside of the automobile sector a voice in picking leaders.

Gamble, who was replaced by Ray Curry, was not charged in the federal probe. He has said the union is now clean and will have safeguards in place to prevent the scandal from happening again.

Eleven union officials and a late official's spouse have pleaded guilty in the corruption probe since 2017, including the two presidents who served before Gamble, Gary Jones and Dennis Williams. Both were sentenced to prison.

Not all of the convictions were linked. The first wave, which included some Fiat Chrysler employees, involved money paid as bribes from a Fiat Chrysler-UAW

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Michigan Intends To 'Pave the Way' For Charging On-Road EVs

(AP) - Plans are under way for Michigan to construct a first-in-the-nation segment of road that will charge electric vehicles while they're driving. Gov. Gretchen Whitmer made the announcement Sept. 21 at the Motor Bella auto show in Pontiac.

Michigan's Department of Transportation and the Office of Future Mobility and Electrification are partnering to make a one-mile stretch of state roadway in Wayne, Oakland or Macomb counties to allow public transportation and private vehicles to charge while traveling as a part of the Inductive Vehicle Charging Pilot, according to a news release.

"Michigan was home to the first mile of paved road, and now we're paving the way for the roads of tomorrow with innovative infrastructure that will support the economy and the environment, helping us achieve our goal of carbon neutrality by 2050," Whitmer said in the release.

As electric vehicles advance, charging infrastructure has become a priority for Michigan cities that want to draw residents. The city of Saginaw got its first charging stations in September in the hope that those traveling in the east side of the state toward tourist areas in northern Michigan will stop since there is little electric vehicle infrastructure available at most destinations.

The state plans to release a request for proposal on Sept. 28 to evaluate and implement the stretch of road, the release said.

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Bolt Resumes Production After Battery Fires

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"We're grateful for the patience of owners and dealers as we work to advance solutions to this recall," said Doug Parks, GM executive vice president, Global Product Development, Purchasing and Supply Chain. "Resuming battery module production is a first step and we'll continue to work aggressively with LG to obtain additional battery supply. In addition, we're optimistic a new advanced diagnostic software will provide more convenience for our customers."

GM has not been the only EV manufacturer with battery woes. BMW, Ford and Hyundai have all issued recalls due to battery fire hazards and Tesla has had several batteries catch fire in crashes.

Hyundai recalled 82,000 of its 2019-20 model Nona. Last fall, the company issued a recall to install updated battery management software and in April the company began replacing batteries in the recalled vehicles.

A NHTSA report indicated some cells manufactured at LG's Nanjing, China, factory had folded anode tabs that could allow lithium plating to contact the cathode, resulting in an electrical short leading to fires.

Last fall, Ford suspended sales of its European Plug-In Hybrid, Kuga, and then issued a recall for 20,000 units after four of the vehicles caught fire as a result of overheating batteries.

The incidents led Ford to replace all the battery packs in its Kuga model and delay produc-



Bolt replacement batteries coming mid-October.

tion of its Ford Escape Plug-In Hybrid in the U.S.

BMW, whose batteries are made by Samsung, has also had short-circuiting issues with its batteries, which has led the German automaker to recall all of its 2020 and 2021 model year Plug-In Hybrids sold in the U.S.

While GM has said it will begin replacing Bolt batteries at dealerships in mid-October, there's still no word on how long it will take to replace all the batteries in the fleet. However, the company did say LG is adding capacity to provide GM with more cells.

GM customers, a spokesman said, will get an extended battery 8-year/100,000-mile limited warranty with their new batteries.

While GM's next-generation platform, the Ultium, uses lithium-ion battery cells made in Spring Hill, Tenn., a spokesman said GM and LG will take all they've learned from this recall and apply it to Ultium going forward.

UAW Members Set to Vote On New Election Changes

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training center in Detroit. Jones and Williams were caught in an embezzlement scheme with the leaders taking thousands of dollars of union money to buy golf clubs, booze, lavish meals and to rent villas in Palm Springs, Calif.

During the probe, Schneider, who led the investigation, said the corruption was so deep that the federal government may take over the union.

The U.S. Attorney's office said it uncovered embezzlement of more than \$1.5 million in dues money, kickbacks to union officials from

Mike Manley to Join AutoNation

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Auto Nation is the largest chain of car and truck dealerships in the U.S., with more than 300 locations nationwide. The company says it has sold more than 13 million vehicles.

Manley will retain ties with Stellantis as a board member of the Stellantis Foundation.

The native of Britain said "the time feels right for me to open a new chapter," after 20 years first with Chrysler, then with Fiat Chrysler and finally Stellantis.

vendors, and \$3.5 million in illegal payments from executives at Fiat Chrysler who wanted to corruptly influence contract talks.

According to the rules posted by Barofsky, the Labor Department doesn't believe any union resources can be used in the direct election campaign. But the union is negotiating with the Justice Department to amend the court agreement to allow use of limited resources.

Barofsky, who will stay in place for six years unless both sides agree to a shorter term, leads the law firm Jenner & Block's monitoring practice.

Tavares said in a statement that he was sorry to see Manley go.

"It's been my privilege to know Mike first as a competitor, then as a partner and colleague in the creation of Stellantis, but most importantly, always as a friend," the Stellantis CEO said.

"From the very earliest days of our discussions, we shared a truly common vision, belief and commitment and it's on these solid foundations, built over the past several years, that Stellantis has delivered its impressive early results."



GM's Mary Barra discusses Detroit investment with Mayor Duggan, left and WJRM's Lloyd Jackson, right, Sept. 14 in Detroit. photo: courtesy of GM

GM Donates \$50M to Detroit Nonprofits

by Phil Foley

Over the next four years, GM plans to invest another \$46 million in non-profit programs in Detroit, Hamtramck and Highland Park.

GM Chair and CEO Mary Barra, along with Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan, announced the five-year, \$50 million effort, which includes \$4 million in grants that were already awarded Sept. 14 at the Durfee Innovation Society.

"As the home of our headquarters for more than a century, Detroit has always been a priority for General Motors," Barra said. "We're invested in supporting a strong future for this community. Our new commitment will help break down barriers and promote growth through education and economic success."

Since the announcement, a GM spokesman said, the company has seen an increase for grant funding requests. Nonprofits are encouraged to apply for grant funding and can find more information and application resources at www.GM.com/our-company/social-investment.

"We've seen a lot of excitement and buzz," the spokesman said, "And hopefully we'll have more

to share in the near future.

Duggan said, "GM has been a part of this community for the last century, providing good-paying, middle-class jobs for Detroiters. Today's commitment by GM solidifies the company's investment in the people of Detroit, ensuring Detroiters have the skills they need to access these kinds of opportunities for years to come."

Among the first grants awarded in the new program were:

- \$1.25 million to support Human-I-T's work connecting Detroiters to a comprehensive digital support system that includes internet connectivity, devices, tech support and digital literacy skills to create greater access to education and employment.

- \$1 million to the Detroit at Work People Plan and Community Health Corps to support a multifaceted approach to employment, health and well-being resources coordinated across the city with key agencies.

- \$1 million to United Way's Ride United, a mobility initiative that aims to address transportation barriers for workers through ongoing

partnerships with on-demand ride services and United Way for Southeastern Michigan's local social service agency partners.

- \$750,000 to Beyond Basics to provide critical literacy education for students at Cody and Mumford High Schools and support adults at the Family Literacy Center at Durfee Innovation Society.

Following the announcement, more than 450 GM employees kicked off the 11th annual GM Care Week Sept. 20 with volunteer projects throughout the city. That included more than 100 employees working on beautification projects in the area around Factory ZERO.

Another 100 volunteers cleaned up Junction Street and the Cadillac Urban Gardens in Southwest Detroit and an additional 50 partnered with Keep Growing Detroit to help with KGD's fall harvest in Eastern Market.

Last year alone, GM funded 57 projects in the Motor City, impacting an estimated 250,000 people.

Nationwide, more than 2,000 GM employees volunteered 6,000 hours working on 140 community service projects.

NHTSA Starts New Takata Airbag Probe

by TOM KRISHER
AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) – Over 30 million air bags in more than 200 models from 20 car and truck makers are being investigated by a U.S. safety agency because they have the potential to explode and hurl shrapnel.

In a document posted in late September, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration said it opened the probe into air bag inflators made from 2011 through 2019 by now-bankrupt Takata that weren't recalled previously.

The probe could reverse a decision made in May of last year not to recall the inflators, which contain a moisture-absorbing chemical called a desiccant.

It wasn't clear what prompted the agency to open the investigation. Last year, it decided against recalling the inflators, based largely on industry research, and said it would monitor them.

"While no present safety risk has been identified, further work is needed to evaluate the future risk of non-recalled desiccated inflators," the agency said in the document.

Included in the probe are models made by Honda, Fiat Chrysler (now Stellantis), General Motors, Ford, Nissan, Tesla, BMW, Toyota, Jaguar Land Rover, Daimler Vans, Mitsubishi, Subaru, Mercedes-Benz, Ferrari, McLaren, Porsche, Mazda, Karma, Fisker and Spartan Fire vehicles. Some of the most popular vehicles in the U.S. are identified in the probe,

including certain Chevrolet Silverado pickups from 2014 and 2015, some Jeep Grand Cherokees from 2011 through 2019, and the Honda CR-V from 2012 through 2015.

The document posted Sept. 21 said none of the inflators under investigation have blown apart while in use.

About 25 million vehicles have the questionable driver or front passenger inflators that were installed at the factory.

At least 5 million more had the inflators installed as replacement parts for more dangerous Takata inflators that have been recalled.

NHTSA didn't immediately comment when asked what changed, prompting it to open the investigation.

The agency said in a statement recently that drivers don't need to take any action. "NHTSA will conduct a thorough investigation, and should we determine that a safety defect exists, we will act," the agency said.

At least 19 people in the U.S. and 28 worldwide have been killed by exploding Takata inflators. More than 400 have been injured in the U.S.

The Japanese company used ammonium nitrate to create a small explosion to inflate air bags in a crash. But the chemical can become more volatile over time when exposed to moisture in the air and high temperatures.

The explosion can blow apart a metal canister and hurl shrapnel into the passenger compartment.

The problem caused the

largest series of auto recalls in U.S. history, with at least 67 million inflators recalled. About 17 million had not been repaired as of January. Worldwide, around 100 million inflators have been recalled.

Takata added the desiccant to absorb moisture and stop the ammonium nitrate from deteriorating.

But in the document, NHTSA said at some point the desiccants will become saturated. In the most hot and humid locations, saturation can take place in five years, the agency said.

Jason Levine, executive director of the Center for Auto Safety, a nonprofit advocacy group, said he's not sure what caused the agency to change from last year. But he said NHTSA is opening the probe before something bad happens.

"What's refreshing here is that NHTSA is taking a step that says we don't have to wait for a body count. That's great," Levine said.

Under President Donald Trump, the agency enacted few safety regulations and was less active in regulating the industry than under past administrations. But Levine said it is being far more active under President Joe Biden.

Levine said the agency should have begun the investigation last year so owners of vehicles with the questionable inflators could know by now whether their air bag systems are safe or whether they're defective.

"It leaves consumers in an unnecessary state of concern," Levine said.