

Tech Center News

31201 Chicago Road South
Warren, Michigan 48093

586-939-6800

Contact us:

Info@TechCenterNews.com

Deadline: Thursday 5:00 p.m.
for the next edition of Monday

William Springer II, publisher
Lisa A. Torretta, operations
Jim Stickford, news

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Go from Couch To 3-Mile Runner In Nine Weeks

The health provider HAP is sponsoring a special "Couch to 5K Challenge" meeting at 6 p.m. Tuesday, April 1, in the Best Western Sterling Inn on Van Dyke in Sterling Heights.

The purpose of the meeting is to teach people how they can go "from a couch potato" to a 5K runner in just nine weeks.

"This online and in-person training program is designed to get you from little or no exercise to running a 5K race (that's 3.1 miles) in just nine pain-free weeks," said HAP (Health Alliance Plan) public relations director Susan Schwandt.

"This program will provide you with encouragement, camaraderie and the technical support needed to complete your first 5K race.

"Good news – the program is free and no prior running experience is needed."

Those who want to participate in the program will have to commit to exercising 30 minutes a day, three days a week, for nine weeks, Schwandt said.

To learn about the program, those interested should attend the April 1 kickoff meeting.

Attendees will learn about how they will participate in group practice runs during weeks three, five, seven and nine.

They will also receive weekly emails and have the ability to chat with other participants online.

All this, Schwandt said, leads up to the 37th Annual Oak Apple Run, presented by HAP, on Saturday, May 31. The race is optional, and entry fees are at the runners' expense.

To learn more about the race, go to oakapplerrun.org. or visit the HAP Web page at hap.org.

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Congress to Investigate GM Response to Ignition Defects

DETROIT (AP) – General Motors executives and government regulators will soon have to explain to Congress why it took years to recall 1.6 million compact cars with a known defect linked to 13 deaths.

And the Justice Department is investigating whether GM broke any laws with its slow response, according to a person briefed on the matter.

Members of two congressional committees will likely ask why a proposed fix to the problem was never implemented and why GM didn't immediately tell car owners about the defect.

Here's a look at the developments so far in the recall and what's ahead.

Q. Which cars is GM recalling?

A. GM is recalling 1.6 million vehicles that were sold in the U.S., Canada and Mexico. The recall includes the Chevrolet Cobalt and Pontiac G5 from the 2005-2007 model years; the Saturn Ion from the 2003-2007 model years; and the Chevrolet HHR, Pontiac Solstice and Saturn Sky from the 2006-2007 model years.

Q. What's the defect?

A. GM says a heavy key ring or jarring from rough roads can cause the ignition switch to move out of the run position and shut off the engine and electrical power. That can knock out power-assisted brakes and steering and disable the front air bags.

Q. What is GM doing to fix the problem?

A. Dealers will replace the igni-

tion switches for free. GM will notify owners when the parts are available and repairs can begin, likely in April. Until then, it is warning owners to remove all items from their key rings, including key fobs if applicable. Only the vehicle key should be left on the ring.

Q. Have any deaths or accidents been linked to this defect?

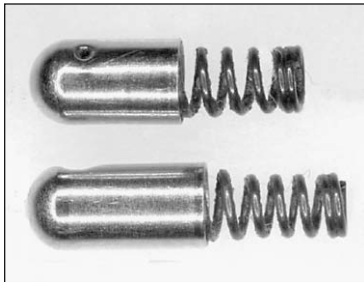
A. The problem has been linked to 31 crashes and 13 front-seat deaths. In each of the fatal crashes, the air bags did not inflate. The engines did not shut off in all cases.

Q. When did GM first know about this problem?

A. In 2004, around the time that the Chevrolet Cobalt first went on sale, GM learned of at least one engine losing power and started investigating the problem. By 2007, it had received more reports, including at least one involving a fatal accident. According to a company timeline that was given to NHTSA, the company approved a redesign of the key head in 2005 but later canceled that plan. The company also alerted dealers that an insert on the key head could fix the problem, but warranty records show only 474 customers have gotten the insert.

Q. Why didn't GM act more quickly?

A. GM opened at least two investigations after reports of engine stalling but closed them after taking no action. At the time, the company was juggling eight



The difference between the original switch detent plunger, top, and the replacement offered by GM is six millimeters. The longer plunger produces more tension, which prevents heavy keys from changing position if jostled.

U.S. brands and losing billions each year, which led to its eventual bankruptcy in 2009. Now, GM has cut excess brands and bureaucracy and is solidly profitable. GM's new CEO has promised "an unvarnished" investigation into what happened.

Q. Did GM report these incidents to the government?

A. Yes. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration also received dozens of complaints from owners about the issue, dating as far back as 2005. NHTSA conducted several investigations into the problem but never ordered a recall.

Q. Why is Congress investigating?

A. Rep. Fred Upton of Michigan, who heads the House Energy and Commerce Committee, wrote a 2000 law that was intended to improve communication between automakers and NHTSA

and help NHTSA identify potential threats to consumers' safety. He wants to know if GM or NHTSA missed opportunities to fix the problem sooner, or if the legislation needs to be strengthened.

Q. What actions can the government take if it finds GM didn't act quickly enough?

A. NHTSA can fine GM up to \$35 million. Automakers are required to report safety problems to NHTSA within five days of learning about them. Congress doubled the maximum fine to \$35 million last year and could increase it further.

Q. What's at stake for GM?

A. It's unclear how much the recall will cost. Toyota Motor Corp. paid \$48.8 million in total fines to the U.S. government for its handling of unintended acceleration recalls. It later paid more than \$1 billion to settle a lawsuit from owners claiming their cars lost value. It still faces other lawsuits.

The case will also hurt GM's efforts to break from its pre-bankruptcy past. Older, less reliable products still on the road could still haunt GM.

Club GM Sets Golf Outing

Club GM's golf outing at Crystal Mountain Resort takes place during the weekend of May 30-June 1. The event is open to non-Club GM members.

Participants will have the choice of playing on three different golf courses. The two-night, three-day packages include lodging and meals.

Price per person varies from \$430 to \$550, depending on the weekend package selected. The non-golf discount is \$125.

Reservations are made on a first-come, first-served basis and space is limited. The deadline to reserve a spot is April 15.

To learn more about the event, contact Willie Wolf at 586-751-1435.

Chrysler Program Backs Bullying Prevention

In 2014, the Chrysler brand will continue its support of the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights' bullying prevention initiative – RFK Project SEATBELT throughout and beyond the school year.

The Chrysler brand has employed its local dealerships to support the measure during Drive for the Kids fundraisers at area schools, said Chrysler spokesperson Diane Morgan.

The Chrysler brand Drive for the Kids program partners Chrysler Group dealerships with area schools. As part of the program, the automaker uses current-model Town and Country minivans to help raise money for school programs in need of funding.

"The Chrysler brand is committed to applying its resources to help build strong and safe communities through great partnerships with organizations such as the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights and its bullying prevention initiative," said Chrysler President and CEO Al Gardner.

"As part of our Drive for the

Kids programs throughout 2014, we will continue to distribute free information about this important issue in a space where the topic is vital to the audience, including leaders in the school system, families and children."

All schools participating in the Drive for the Kids program, Morgan said, receive a kit from RFK Project SEATBELT with bullying prevention materials to share with their students and parents.

The minivans will play a "bullying" video on in-car video monitors during the drives.

More information about the Chrysler brand's support of the RFK Project SEATBELT bullying prevention initiative that began in 2013 can be found at www.projectseatbelt.org and Chrysler brand's Facebook Page/Drive for Kids Tab.

Since its inception, the national Drive for the Kids program has raised millions for education.

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