

BMW Recalling 367K Cars To Fix Cables

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DETROIT (AP) — U.S. safety regulators and BMW say owners of some 5- and 6-Series cars should park them outside until a battery cable problem can be fixed.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration on Thursday said BMW is recalling more than 367,000 of the cars in the U.S. from the 2004 to 2010 model years. A battery cable connector can loosen in the trunk and overheat. In extreme cases, it could lead to a smoldering fire in a trunk floor mat, according to documents posted on NHTSA's website.

The U.S. recall is part of a larger one announced Monday by the German automaker that affects 1.3 million cars worldwide. BMW spokesman David Buchko says the company knows of only one fire in the U.S. related to a loose battery cable. No injuries have been reported from the problem, he said, adding that the recommendation to park the cars outside is merely a precaution.

"We've got one known case of actual fire here in the U.S., having sold 367,000 cars," he said.

The recall affects 5-series sedans and sports wagons, as well as the 6-series coupe and convertible. Most of the cars in the recall are 5-series sedans, BMW's No. 2 seller in the U.S. In 2010, the last model year affected by the recall, BMW sold almost 39,000 of the cars, according to Autodata Corp.

According to NHTSA documents, BMW found out there was a problem in 2006 when unspecified incidents were reported in Germany and Sweden. The company said in a letter to NHTSA that it investigated but couldn't identify a cause. There were incidents in the U.S. in April and November of 2009 and May of 2011. Those, too, were investigated and no cause was found.

In April last year, a task force was set up to investigate further. On March 12, tests pointed to a connector in the trunk that links two battery cables. The company said that in rare cases, the connector may have been incorrectly attached to the trunk floor. BMW decided on March 16 to recall the cars, according to the letter.

BMW said its dealers will inspect the connector and tighten it if needed. Dealers also will add protective grease and replace a plastic battery cover. Recall work will begin in April.

NHTSA spokeswoman Lynda Tran said BMW initiated the recall and made the initial recommendation that the cars be parked outside.

"The agency may make a variety of recommendations to ensure consumer safety in connection with a recall as appropriate to the potential issue, including where to

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safely park a vehicle," she said.

In February, BMW agreed to pay \$3 million in fines for delays in reporting safety defects and recalls to U.S. regulators. An examination of 16 recalls issued by BMW of North America LLC in 2010 found a pattern in which the automaker failed to meet federal requirements that known defects be reported within five days, NHTSA said in a statement.

As part of a settlement, BMW agreed to make internal changes to its recall process, NHTSA said.

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