

Chrysler To Recall 919K SUVs To Fix Air Bags

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DETROIT (AP) — Chrysler is recalling more than 919,000 older-model Jeep Grand Cherokee and Liberty SUVs worldwide because the air bags can inflate while people are driving them.

The recall affects Grand Cherokees from the 2002 through 2004 model years and Libertys from model years 2002 and 2003, according to documents posted Friday on the U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration website.

The safety agency said that a part can fail in the air bag control computer, and the front and side air bags can inflate while the SUVs are being driven. An agency investigation started last year found that the air bags went off 215 times, causing 81 minor injuries. No crashes were reported, but NHTSA said the problem could cause a wreck.

Chrysler, which makes Jeeps, will install an electrical filter free of charge to fix the problem. The company will begin notifying owners of the recall in January.

The recall includes nearly 745,000 SUVs in the U.S., 49,000 in Canada and 22,000 in Mexico. The rest are outside North America.

Dashboard warning lights normally come on before the air bags are inflated, Chrysler spokesman Eric Mayne said. If that happens, the driver should contact a Jeep dealer.

The problem happens in less than three-hundredths of a percent of the vehicles on the road, Mayne said.

NHTSA began investigating the air bags in October of last year after getting complaints about air bags inflating for no reason in Jeep Libertys. Investigators traced the cause to electrical stress on one of two circuits in the control computer. The problem also causes the seat belts to tighten as if a collision were about to happen.

The Grand Cherokees covered by the recall were built from Aug. 1, 2001 to May 16, 2003, while the Libertys were built from June 6, 2001 to March 19, 2003.

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