

Honda Issues Global Recall: Cars Can Roll Away

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DETROIT (AP) — Honda is recalling more than 870,000 minivans and SUVs worldwide because they can roll away even though drivers have removed the keys from the ignition.

The recall announced Wednesday affects older-model vehicles sold mainly in the United States. They were big sellers with families because of their ample space and reputation for quality. Problems with the ignition switches have plagued Honda for years. It has recalled nearly 2.3 million vehicles for the problem since 2003.

Here are details of the latest recall:

MODELS AFFECTED: 347,000 Honda Odyssey minivans and 277,000 Pilot SUVs from the 2003 and 2004 model years. Also 247,000 Acura MDX SUVs from the 2003 through 2006 period. All have automatic transmissions. More than 807,000 were sold in the U.S.

THE PROBLEM: The mechanism that locks the key in the ignition while the vehicles are in gear can wear out. When that happens, drivers of the vans and SUVs are able to remove keys without shifting into park. Some have left the vehicles, which have rolled off unexpectedly while in gear. The U.S. safety regulators began investigating the problem in October after owners filed 43 complaints with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Owners reported 16 crashes due to the problem.

INJURIES: Two people were hurt in the crashes, according to NHTSA's database. In the most serious case, the driver reported a broken leg after being run over by a 2003 Odyssey. The driver parked the van in a sloped driveway and after leaving the Honda, the van started to roll backward. The driver tripped while trying to stop the van. "I had an open fracture of my fibula (lower leg bone) and crush injuries on my shin area," the driver reported. NHTSA does not identify drivers who file complaints.

THE FIX: Dealers will repair the ignition interlock system free of charge. Owners will get notices starting in February.

OTHER PROBLEMS: Honda has had trouble with its ignition interlock switches in the past. Other vehicles affected by the problem include older Accords, Civics and Elements.

NHTSA also is investigating brake problems with the 2005 Pilot. The probe covers nearly 88,000 SUVs. The brakes can come on without drivers stepping on the pedal. There's no fix yet, but investigators are looking at problems with a computer-controlled system that stops the vehicle as fast as possible in emergency situations. Honda says it's cooperating. Investigators will determine if the problem is bad enough for Honda to recall the SUVs.

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The 2003 Pilot was recalled in March because the low-beam headlights can fail.

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