

# Feds Probe Jeep Grand Cherokee Ceiling Fires

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DETROIT (AP) — U.S. auto safety regulators are investigating complaints that the ceilings can catch fire in 2012 Jeep Grand Cherokee SUVs.

The probe, announced Friday by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, covers an estimated 146,000 of the popular sport utility vehicles.

Three customers complained to the government that their ceilings caught fire near the passenger-side sun visor while they were driving, starting with a burning smell, then smoke and flames. In all three cases, customers lowered their windows to clear the smoke, but that increased the fire's intensity, NHTSA said in documents posted on its website.

In all three cases, the fires continued after the SUVs had been shut off, and flames had to be put out with fire extinguishers or by firefighters. The flames caused a sunroof to shatter in one instance, while in another, a burning sun visor fell to the passenger seat and spread the flames, NHTSA said. The safety agency said it had no reports of any injuries.

After the fires were put out, all three SUVs had to be towed to a dealership for repairs.

Investigators will decide if the problem is serious enough to cause a recall.

In one of the complaints, a customer told NHTSA that he or she smelled smoke while driving a Grand Cherokee. The driver rolled down the windows, then saw white smoke on the right side of the SUV. "Then the passenger visor melted off the ceiling," the customer wrote. That was followed by a fire in the hole near where the visor had been attached. "The fire dripped down onto the passenger seat and I called 911 and pulled over."

The customer said two men used a fire extinguisher to put out the flames, according to the complaint.

Chrysler said its engineers are working with the government on the case. The company said no determination has been made about the cause and the investigation is in its early stages. "A vehicle fire is a complex event. Determining whether any two fires share a cause is a complicated analysis," Chrysler said in a statement.

The company said it will advise customers if they need to take any action, and those with concerns can consult with dealers or call Chrysler at 1-800-853-1403.

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