

## [Massive ARC Car Airbag Inflators Recall Announced](#)

Tuesday, October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is gearing up for a recall of unprecedented proportions, affecting as many as 52 million ARC car airbag inflators. This potential recall could rank as the automotive industry's second-largest recall since the infamous Takata airbag debacle. The recent cascade of recall notices issued by several automakers for thousands of vehicles has thrust ARC airbag inflators into the spotlight. Earlier this month, NHTSA released a letter outlining its demand for ARC Automotive to recall these potentially hazardous airbags.

The safety concerns surrounding ARC airbag inflators have been under scrutiny since 2015, with at least nine ruptures and two fatalities reported during that time. However, the manufacturer, ARC, maintains that these defects are not the result of manufacturing flaws, while three automakers have already initiated recalls.

NHTSA's announcement sets the stage for a colossal recall effort slated for next year, affecting a staggering 52 million airbag inflators. This development raises the specter of another lengthy and complex episode of airbag repairs, impacting tens of millions of vehicles.



## Past Accidents Involving Car Airbags

The NHTSA convened a public meeting in Washington, D.C., where it discussed its decision to call for recalls involving airbag inflators manufactured by ARC Automotive and Delphi Automotive Systems.

These inflators have been linked to incidents where they exploded with excessive force, propelling dangerous shrapnel towards vehicle occupants. NHTSA's scrutiny of ARC inflators dates back to July 2015, coinciding with the initial stages of the Takata airbag recall, which has yet to be fully resolved and has affected hundreds of millions of vehicles worldwide, with significant casualties in the United States.

NHTSA's preliminary findings indicate that there have been seven inflator ruptures in crashes in the United States since 2014. One tragic incident resulted in the death of a driver in a 2015 Chevrolet Traverse, with metal shards being ejected from the airbag. In other cases, drivers and passengers suffered facial injuries. A similar fatal incident occurred in Canada involving a 2009 Hyundai Elantra in 2016, and a 2015 Volkswagen Golf with an ARC inflator experienced a passenger-side airbag inflator rupture in Turkey in 2017.

Several of these incidents involved Chevrolet Traverse vehicles, with the most recent occurring in March 2023. General Motors responded by recalling nearly one million vehicles in May, including some Traverse models. Other vehicles, such as a 2002 Chrysler Town & Country, a 2004 Kia Optima, and a 2016 Audi A3 e-tron, have also been implicated in inflator ruptures during crashes. BMW initiated a recall for this issue in 2017, while Volkswagen followed suit in 2022.

## Troubling Statistics

According to NHTSA's estimates, based on 2.6 million reported deployments of ARC inflators, the risk of ruptures during future crashes could be as high as 1 in 370,000, a troubling statistic that underscores the urgency of the recall. However, Steve Gold, vice president of product integrity for ARC, disputes these findings, characterizing the ruptures as isolated incidents and refuting any systemic defect. He argues that comparing ARC inflators to Takata inflators is misleading, as Takata's issues were largely attributed to humidity and age, whereas ARC has only seven known defects in 23 years of production.

NHTSA attributes the alleged defects to a manufacturing problem where "excess weld slag" on the metal seam, resulting from the inflator's assembly process, can obstruct gas flow to the airbag, leading to excessive pressure and eventual rupture. This dangerous outcome can propel metal fragments into the vehicle's passenger compartment.

ARC received a standing order from NHTSA in 2016 to report manufacturing ruptures, and by 2018, they began using borescopes to detect excess weld slag or debris in their inflators. However, while ARC conducted tests in 2018 on over 900 inflators from salvage yards spanning 2001 through 2005 model-year vehicles, with no ruptures detected, automakers reported ruptures in 2021 and 2023. NHTSA's calculation of 52 million inflators encompasses all those produced by ARC and Delphi before the implementation of borescope inspections.

## Car Airbag Manufacturers and Automakers Notified

ARC contends that it is a Tier 2 supplier and not legally responsible for initiating recalls like automakers. However, NHTSA's September initial decision letter asserts that ARC must comply with federal safety regulations and is not exempt from such recalls.

This issue may lead to a recall of 12 automakers' vehicles, including BMW of North America, Fiat Chrysler (FCA) US, Ford Motor Company, General Motors, Hyundai Motor America, Kia America, Toyota Motor North America, Tesla, Volkswagen Group of America, Mercedes-Benz USA, Porsche Cars North America, and Maserati North America.

The situation has prompted the filing of six class-action lawsuits in 2022, alleging economic harm. These lawsuits target ARC Automotive Inc., various automakers, and two airbag manufacturers that used ARC inflators (Joyson Safety Systems and Toyoda Gosei), which have been consolidated for federal judicial review. While some claims have asserted that ARC's use of ammonium nitrate, a low-cost propellant, was inherently problematic, NHTSA has not identified it as a root cause in its investigations.

NHTSA is currently accepting written responses to its hearing until December 4, after which it is expected to make a final decision regarding the recall.

### Key Points Summarized

1. **Why the Recall:** The recall is due to defects in ARC airbag inflators, which can propel metal fragments into vehicle occupants instead of inflating airbags properly, posing a risk of death or injury.
2. **Number of Inflators Recalled:** NHTSA demands a recall of 67 million inflators in the U.S., with additional vehicles outside the U.S. potentially affected.
3. **Impacted Vehicles:** The recall affects a significant portion of the 284 million vehicles on U.S. roads, but a comprehensive list of affected models is yet to be released.
4. **Remedies:** Automakers are offering free repairs or replacements for affected vehicles, with some providing temporary vehicle replacements.
5. **Injuries Reported:** Two fatalities and numerous injuries have been linked to defective ARC inflators, with injuries continuing to occur.
6. **NHTSA's Investigation:** NHTSA initiated its investigation in 2015, and ARC disputes the findings, attributing the issues to isolated manufacturing anomalies.
7. **Recall Initiators:** Multiple automakers, including General Motors, Volkswagen, Ford, and BMW, have initiated recalls due to ARC airbag inflator defects.
8. **Lawsuits:** Several class-action lawsuits have been filed against ARC and automakers over the ARC airbag inflator issue.
9. **Comparison to Takata:** While both ARC and Takata used ammonium nitrate, the issues stem from different causes, with ARC's problems related to manufacturing defects.

This other article has some useful tips for you to have a safe and calm drive: [Safe Driving Key Instructions to Have a Smooth Ride](#)