

The Virgin Islands Consortium

V.I. Honda And Acura Owners Should Replace Airbags Immediately; A.G. Claude Walker Warns

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ST. JOHN -- Following an urgent plea by federal regulators on Thursday that airbags in more than 300,000 Honda and Acura vehicles were at an unacceptably high risk of exploding, and should be replaced immediately, Attorney General Claude Walker on Friday asked Honda and Acura owners in the territory to stop driving the affected vehicles and get them repaired immediately.

Laboratory tests underway on airbags collected from recalled vehicles indicate that Takata airbags in certain 2001-3 Honda and Acura vehicles had “as high as a 50 percent chance of a dangerous airbag inflator rupture in a crash,” the U.S. transportation secretary, Anthony Foxx, said in a bulletin.

"These vehicles are unsafe and need to be repaired immediately," Mr. Foxx said. "Folks should not drive these vehicles unless they are going straight to a dealer to have them repaired immediately, free of charge."

In the territory, Mr. Walker was just as direct.

"These cars pose a grave and immediate risk. I urge all residents of the Virgin Islands who drive these 2001-3 Honda and Acura vehicles to check whether their cars are covered by this new federal notice, to stop using them, and to seek immediate repairs," said Mr. Walker. "As NHTSA [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration] again has made clear, the risk that these airbags will explode is especially great in high temperature and humidity areas such as the Virgin Islands."

He added: "This latest warning indicates that Virgin Islands residents driving these vehicles are at the greatest possible risk of injury and must not ignore this issue."

The at-risk vehicles are:

? 2001-2002 Honda Civic ? 2001-2002 Honda Accord ? 2002-2003 Acura TL ? 2002 Honda CR-V ? 2002 Honda Odyssey ? 2003 Acura CL ? 2003 Honda Pilot

The bulletin adds new urgency to the effort to recall and replace defective Takata airbags, which have been linked to at least 14 deaths and more than 100 injuries. Problems with the propellant that inflates the airbag can cause a metal part to rupture when the bag is deployed in a crash, shooting metal fragments toward the car's driver or passengers.

Last month, the Virgin Islands Attorney General's Office filed a [far-reaching lawsuit against Takata and Honda](#), for producing and selling these dangerous airbags, and for failing to disclose accurately to Virgin Islands consumers the risks from these airbags.

Given the health and safety issues involved and Takata's risky financial status, the Mr. Walker is seeking a preliminary injunction requiring Takata to set aside funds to ensure that Virgin Islands consumers can be made whole from the sale of these defective and potentially deadly vehicles.

Currently, the Attorney General's Office is waiting for the defendants' replies to its lawsuit. However, as Mr. Walker noted, "action to address the immediate risk to Honda drivers cannot await the resolution of the lawsuit."

Honda has promised that Virgin Islands consumers who cannot obtain immediate repairs will be able to use a loaner vehicle, or will be reimbursed for a rental car.

Consumers who are told that their cars cannot be promptly repaired, or who are not given access to a substitute vehicle, should notify the Attorney General's Office at (340) 774-5666 ext. 107 or 103.

Feature Image: A deployed airbag in a 2001 Honda Accord in a salvage yard in Medley, Fla. Credit Joe Raedle/Getty Images

