

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Participating Honda Dealerships Hosting Free Airbag Replacement Events

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ST. CROIX -- The Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs made known this week that at least two Honda and Acura dealerships were hosting free airbag replacement events as part of the Takata airbag recall that affected millions of vehicles and is said to be the largest airbag recall in history.

Attorney General Claude Walker in July moved with haste to warn the territory's drivers operating vehicles affected by the Takata airbag recall of the dangers of operating them. He also urged local Honda and Acura vehicle owners to visit any local dealership to replace the airbags, promising that Honda would cover all costs.

Called Repair-A-Thon, the first event will be held September 8-10 at Hendricks International on St. Croix, located in La Grande Princesse. For more information call 430-718-8370. A second event will be held September 15-17 by John's Auto at the Fort Christian parking lot in St. Thomas. Call 340-774-8740 for more information.

"Many makes and models are being affected by airbag recalls, whether it be a component or an entire system. The community is in need of more support through initiatives like that taken by Honda," said D.L.C.A. Commissioner Devin Carrington.

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.

Feature Image: A recalled Takata airbag inflator that was removed from a Honda Pilot. (Joe Skipper/Reuters)