DEPARTM

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

[Docket No. NHTSA-2026-0793]

Initial Decision That Certain Frontal Driver Air Bag Inflators Manufactured by Jilin Province Detiannuo Safety Technology Co., Ltd. (DTN) Contain a Safety Defect

AGENCY: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), Department of Transportation (DOT).

ACTION: Notice of initial decision.

SUMMARY: NHTSA has made an initial decision that certain air bag inflators manufactured by DTN contain a defect related to motor vehicle safety. Available information demonstrates that the inflators were imported into the United States by unknown importers (likely illegally). NHTSA is aware of twelve instances in which the inflators have ruptured in vehicles in the United States, resulting in ten fatalities and two severe injuries. Following this initial decision, NHTSA is required by statute to seek public comment and allow the manufacturer an opportunity to dispute the initial decision. After review of any comments or additional relevant information, should NHTSA makes a final determination that the subject inflators contain a defect related to motor vehicle safety, the sale of the inflators (whether separately or installed in an air bag module) in the United States would be illegal.

DATES: Comments should be submitted no later than April 17, 2026.

ADDRESSES:

You may submit written submissions to the docket number identified in the heading of this document by any of the following methods:

- *Federal eRulemaking Portal*: Go to https://www.regulations.gov. Follow the online instructions for submitting comments.

- *Mail*: Docket Management Facility: U.S. Department of Transportation, 1200 New Jersey Avenue S.E., West Building Ground Floor, Room W12–140, Washington, D.C. 20590–0001.
- *Hand Delivery or Courier:* 1200 New Jersey Avenue S.E., West Building Ground Floor, Room W12–140, between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. ET, Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.
- *Fax:* 202–493–2251.

Instructions: All submissions must include the agency name and docket number. Note that all written submissions received will be posted without change to https://www.regulations.gov, including any personal information provided. Please see the Privacy Act discussion below. We will consider all written submissions received before the closing date indicated above.

Docket: For access to the docket to read background documents or written submissions received, go to https://www.regulations.gov at any time or to 1200 New Jersey Avenue S.E., West Building Ground Floor, Room W12–140, Washington, D.C. 20590, between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal Holidays. Telephone: 202–366–9826.

Privacy Act: In accordance with 49 U.S.C. § 30118(b)(1), NHTSA will make a final decision only after providing an opportunity for DTN and any interested person to present information, views, and arguments. DOT posts written submissions from manufacturers and interested persons, without edit, including any personal information the submitter provides, to www.regulations.gov, as described in the system of records notice (DOT/ALL–14 Federal Docket Management System (FDMS)), which can be reviewed at www.transportation.gov/privacy.

Confidential Business Information: If you wish to submit any information under a claim of confidentiality, you must submit your request directly to NHTSA's Office of the Chief Counsel. Requests for confidentiality are governed by 49 CFR Part 512. NHTSA is currently

treating electronic submission as an acceptable method for submitting confidential business information (CBI) to the agency under Part 512.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dylan Voneiff, Office of the Chief Counsel, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 1200 New Jersey Avenue S.E.., Washington, D.C. 20590; dylan.voneiff@dot.gov.

The publicly available information on which this initial decision is based will be available on the agency's website at, https://www.nhtsa.gov/recalls?nhtsaId=EA25005, and on the public docket under the docket number in the heading of this document.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Pursuant to 49 U.S.C. 30118(a) and 49 CFR 554.10, NHTSA has made an initial decision that certain frontal driver air bag inflators manufactured by Jilin Province Detiannuo Safety Technology Co., Ltd. (DTN) contain a defect related to motor vehicle safety. These air bag inflators have been imported into the United States by unknown importers, likely illegally. NHTSA is aware of twelve instances in which such inflators have ruptured in vehicles in the United States after the vehicle's air bag was commanded to deploy, causing metal debris to be forcefully ejected into the vehicle's occupant compartment, resulting in ten deaths and two severe injuries. NHTSA has concluded that these inflators pose an unreasonable risk of serious injury or death to vehicle occupants.

A. Inflators Subject to this Initial Decision

The inflators subject to this initial decision were manufactured by DTN in 2021 and 2022, and at or about the time of manufacture were etched or labeled with an identifier beginning "DTN60DB"[1] on the face of the inflator cap. Exemplar photographs of the marking or labeling are shown below[2]:

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[1] The manufacture date of the inflators is also part of the code etched onto the inflator cap. The code begins DTN60DB, is followed by four digits representing the year of manufacture, two digits representing the month of manufacture, two digits representing the day of manufacture, and ending in a part identification sequence number.

[2] Larger photographs can be found in a docket memorandum. *See* 60DB Inflator Photographs, Docket No. NHTSA-2026-0793, www.regulations.gov/documents/NHTSA-2026-0793.

In addition, the inflators have a label on the electrical connector side that includes a bar code containing the number sequence “144415654 666631” or “144415654 666633.” This label remains visible when the inflator is installed in an air bag module. An exemplar photo is shown below:

The inflators subject to this initial decision are described as the “subject inflators.” In at least ten of the twelve incidents outlined below, the subject inflators were installed as replacement (*i.e.*, aftermarket) equipment after the vehicle was involved in a previous crash in which a driver air bag deployed. NHTSA does not have information about how or why subject inflators were installed in the other two incidents.

Since the subject inflators were likely imported illegally, NHTSA has been unable, despite substantial efforts, to obtain sufficient information to estimate the number of subject inflators in the United States with any confidence. The agency’s investigation is continuing.

B. Known Inflator Ruptures Resulting in Deaths and Injuries

The agency is currently aware of twelve confirmed subject inflator ruptures in the United States. At least ten of the incidents involved vehicles that had their air bags replaced following a prior crash.

- On May 30, 2023, a DTN60DB inflator manufactured in December 2021ruptured in a Model Year 2018 Chevrolet Malibu during a crash in Dallas, TX. The driver was killed by shrapnel expelled from the ruptured inflator.
- On June 11, 2023, a DTN60DB inflator manufactured in November 2021 ruptured in a Model Year 2020 Chevrolet Malibu during a crash in Sarasota, FL. The driver was killed by shrapnel expelled from the ruptured inflator.
- On September 4, 2023, a DTN60DB inflator manufactured in November 2021ruptured in a Model Year 2021 Chevrolet Malibu during a crash in Philadelphia, PA. The driver was severely injured by shrapnel expelled from the ruptured inflator.
- On October 25, 2023, a DTN60DB inflator with an unknown date of manufacture ruptured in a Model Year 2020 Chevrolet Malibu during a crash in Fort Worth, TX. The driver was severely injured by shrapnel expelled from the ruptured inflator.
- On March 1, 2024, a DTN60DB inflator manufactured in December 2021 ruptured in a Model Year 2022 Chevrolet Malibu during a crash in Oklahoma City, OK. The driver was killed by shrapnel expelled from the ruptured inflator.
- On February 3, 2025, a DTN60DB inflator manufactured in June 2022 ruptured in a Model Year 2017 Hyundai Sonata during a crash in Phoenix, AZ. The driver was killed by shrapnel expelled from the ruptured inflator.
- On July 30, 2025, a DTN60DB inflator manufactured in March 2022 ruptured in a Model Year 2019 Hyundai Sonata during a crash in West Valley City, UT. The driver was killed by shrapnel expelled from the ruptured inflator.
- On September 26, 2025, a DTN60DB inflator manufactured in November 2021 ruptured in a Model Year 2020 Chevrolet Malibu during a crash in Hayward, CA. The driver was killed by shrapnel expelled from the ruptured inflator.
- On October 31, 2025, a DTN60DB inflator manufactured in December 2021 ruptured in a Model Year 2018 Chevrolet Malibu during a crash in Wichita, KS. The driver was killed by shrapnel expelled from the ruptured inflator.
- On December 16, 2025, a DTN60DB inflator manufactured in December 2021 ruptured in a Model Year 2019 Chevrolet Malibu during a crash in Toledo, OH. The driver was killed by shrapnel expelled from the ruptured inflator.

- On December 16, 2025, a DTN60DB inflator manufactured in January 2022 ruptured in a Model Year 2018 Hyundai Sonata during a crash in Austin, TX. The driver was killed by shrapnel expelled from the ruptured inflator.

- On February 16, 2026, a DTN60DB manufactured in June 2022 ruptured in a Model Year 2020 Chevrolet Malibu during a crash in Clarksdale, MS. The driver was killed by shrapnel expelled from the ruptured inflator.

Though NHTSA is only aware of ruptures involving subject inflators installed as aftermarket equipment in Chevrolet Malibu or Hyundai Sonata vehicles, there is no information indicating the problem is limited to those vehicles.

C. Background Regarding Air Bags

Air bags are safety equipment designed to protect vehicle occupants in the event of a crash. Air bags have been used in passenger vehicles since the 1970s and were mandated by NHTSA in 1991. All new vehicles have been required to have frontal air bags since September 1998. Paired with seat belts, air bags forcibly deploy to control the movement of the occupant's upper body and head during a moderate to severe crash. Upon such an occurrence, a signal to the air bag system's electronic control unit initiates the ignition of propellant housed within an inflator to rapidly generate gas that will fill an air bag cushion to deploy in a manner that limits forward movement by the occupant.

The subject inflators are pyrotechnic gas-generators. In general, an air bag inflator is a component part of an air bag module. An air bag module typically consists of a mounting bracket, inflator (device that generates gas), cushion (bag that fills with gas), cover (decorative part that matches the vehicle interior), and connecting wires.

Air bags, when properly deployed, provide significant safety benefits. NHTSA estimates that frontal air bags have saved more than fifty thousand lives over the past 30 years.[3] The rupture of an air bag inflator during deployment is rare and extremely dangerous. Instead of remaining intact within the module and releasing gas into the cushion, the metal inflator

[3] https://www.nhtsa.gov/vehicle-safety/air-bags.

explodes—ejecting metal shrapnel from the module in a manner likely to kill or severely injure any human with which it makes direct contact.

D. Legal Background on Safety Defects and Legal Consequences

The National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act (Safety Act), as amended, requires manufacturers (including importers) to conduct a recall for safety defects in motor vehicles and motor vehicle equipment. *See* 49 U.S.C. 30118-20; *see also id.* sec. 30102(a)(6). Specifically, a manufacturer must notify NHTSA, owners, dealers, and distributors of any "defect . . . related to motor vehicle safety." 49 U.S.C. 30118. The Safety Act defines "defect" as "includ[ing] any defect in performance, construction, a component, or material of a motor vehicle or motor vehicle equipment." 49 U.S.C. 30102(a)(3). "Motor vehicle safety" means "the performance of a motor vehicle or motor vehicle equipment in a way that protects the public against unreasonable risk of accidents occurring because of the design, construction, or performance of a motor vehicle, and against unreasonable risk of death or injury in an accident, and includes nonoperational safety of a motor vehicle." *Id*. sec. 30101(a)(8).

Identifying the root cause of a failure is not necessary to make a safety defect determination. *See United States v. Gen. Motors Corp.*, 518 F.2d 420, 432 (D.C. Cir. 1975) (explaining that "a determination of 'defect' does not require any predicate of a finding identifying engineering, metallurgical, or manufacturing failures"). A defect that leads to failure of a vital component, such as an air bag rupturing rather than protecting the driver, presents an unreasonable risk to safety. *See United States v. General Motors Corp.* 561 F.2d 923, 929 (D.C. Cir. 1977) ("*Pitman Arms*").

Any safety defect determination on replacement equipment,[4] whether made by NHTSA or by a manufacturer, results in a prohibition on the sale of the equipment for installation in a

[4] Replacement equipment is "motor vehicle equipment . . . that is not original equipment" "installed on a motor vehicle at the time of delivery to the first purchaser." 49 U.S.C. § 30102(b)(1)(C), (D). Under the Safety Act, an air bag inflator used to replace a previously deployed air bag is replacement equipment. *See id.* § 30102(a)(8),

motor vehicle. 49 U.S.C. 30120(j). In addition, if NHTSA issues a final decision that there is a safety defect, no person may "sell, offer for sale, introduce or deliver for introduction in interstate commerce, or import into the United States" the equipment subject to the determination. *Id.* sec. 30112(a)(3). In other words, if NHTSA issues a final decision finding a safety defect, the sale by any person of either a subject inflator or a module containing a subject inflator for installation in a motor vehicle in the United States would be illegal.

E. The Agency's Investigation

On October 21, 2025, NHTSA's Office of Defects Investigation (ODI) opened an Engineering Analysis (EA25005) to investigate allegations of ruptures involving air bag inflators manufactured by DTN.

NHTSA's investigation was prompted by reports of eight vehicle crashes in which a rupture of a DTN air bag inflator occurred during the deployment of the driver side air bag.

On June 16, 2023, ODI received a Vehicle Owner Questionnaire (VOQ #11527380) alleging that the rupture of a driver side air bag inflator caused fatal injuries to the driver of a MY 2020 Chevrolet Malibu. ODI's assessment of the rupture indicated that the air bag inflator was not original equipment and was instead manufactured by DTN.

From June 2023 to July 2024, ODI became aware of four additional ruptures involving substandard air bag modules equipped on Chevrolet Malibu vehicles. At the time, there was insufficient information to determine who manufactured the ruptured inflators. In March 2025, NHTSA learned of another rupture involving a suspected substandard, aftermarket inflator that was equipped in a MY 2017 Hyundai Sonata. The driver of this vehicle sustained fatal injuries that appeared related to the rupture. In August 2025, NHTSA received a similar report of a fatal air bag rupture in a MY 2019 Hyundai Sonata. In October 2025, NHTSA learned of a fatal air

(b)(1)(C), (D). An equipment manufacturer, including an importer, is responsible under the Safety Act for recalling replacement equipment. *See id.* §§ 30102(a)(6), 30118(b).

bag rupture in a MY 2020 Chevrolet Malibu. Photographs of the air bag components in these three crashes indicated that DTN manufactured each ruptured inflator. Further investigation of the inflator fragments in three of the prior incidents confirmed that DTN also manufactured those ruptured inflators. Photographs of the components involved in one of the other incidents also strongly suggested that the ruptured inflator was manufactured by DTN.

After the investigation was opened, NHTSA learned of four additional crashes involving ruptures of DTN inflators. One rupture occurred in a crash in late October 2025, two additional ruptures occurred in December 2025, and a fourth in February 2026. Each of these inflator ruptures resulted in fatal injuries to the driver, for a total of twelve crashes involving ten deaths and two severe injuries.

As part of its investigation, NHTSA sent an information request to DTN on December 23, 2025 asking for information about the subject components.[5] DTN responded on February 3, 2026 with certain production and component data.[6] NHTSA sent DTN a supplemental information request on March 6, 2026 seeking additional information.[7] DTN failed to respond by the due date of March 23, 2023.

Because of the severe risk, lives lost, and serious injuries to date, NHTSA is issuing this initial decision concluding that the subject inflators contain a defect related to motor vehicle safety posing an unreasonable risk of death or serious injury in the event of a crash.[8]

G. Additional Information on the Initial Decision of a Safety Defect

Based on its investigation, NHTSA has made an initial decision, pursuant to 49 U.S.C. 30118(a) and 49 CFR 554.10, that the subject inflators contain a safety-related defect. Ruptures of the subject inflators during the deployment of the air bag in a crash have led to ten fatalities

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[5] https://static.nhtsa.gov/odi/inv/2025/INIM-EA25005-34958.pdf.
[6] *See* https://www.nhtsa.gov/recalls?nhtsaId=EA25005.
[7] *Id.*
[8] Although NHTSA has often issued a recall request letter in advance of issuing an initial decision, that is not a required step. In consideration of the circumstances here, NHTSA is proceeding with the statutory process, which begins with issuance of an initial decision. *See* 49 U.S.C. § 30118(a).

from May 30, 2023 to present. Two additional ruptures of the subject inflators during that time resulted in severe injuries. The agency preliminarily finds that this number of performance failures of air bag inflators is sufficient to establish a safety defect, since, in addition to failing to protect vehicle occupants as they should, they pose a direct risk of death or serious injury to vehicle occupants. Air bags are essential, legally-required items of motor vehicle equipment. *See* 49 CFR 571.208. Absent a defect, an air bag inflator inflates the air bag, helping to minimize or avoid injury to occupants in a crash. When the subject inflators malfunction, they not only fail to function as a safety device, but instead actively threaten death or injury—even in crashes where vehicle occupants would otherwise likely emerge unharmed. The agency preliminarily finds that this defect poses an unreasonable risk of death or injury from metal parts forcibly propelled into the occupant compartment of a vehicle during a crash.

Pursuant to the Safety Act, NHTSA may make a final decision "only after giving the manufacturer an opportunity to present information, views, and arguments showing that there is no defect or noncompliance or that the defect does not affect motor vehicle safety. Any interested person also shall be given an opportunity to present information, views, and arguments." 49 U.S.C. § 30118(b)(1).[9] If NHTSA makes a final decision that the subject inflators contain a safety defect, NHTSA will issue an order requiring compliance with the Safety Act.[10] *See id.* § 30118(b)(2); *see also id.* §§ 30112(a)(3), 30120(j).

Authority: 49 U.S.C. 30118(a), (b); 49 CFR 554.10; delegations of authority at 49 CFR 1.50(a) and 49 CFR 501.8.

Issued on: April 2, 2026

[9] Although NHTSA may hold a public hearing under 49 CFR 554.10, such a hearing is not required. *See* 49 U.S.C. § 30118(a)-(b);49 CFR 554.10(a). In consideration of the ten fatalities and two severe injuries, NHTSA is forgoing a public hearing and will instead seek written submissions. Given the risk of death or severe injury from a ruptured inflator, NHTSA is limiting the comment period to 15 days. *See* 49 CFR 554.10(a).

Eileen Sullivan,

Associate Administrator for Enforcement.

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