Kelley Blue Book's Car Recalls 101: What Vehicle Owners Need to Know to Stay Safe

ATLANTA, March 6, 2023 /PRNewswire/ -- Millions of Americans are driving cars that have recalls, a staggering thought considering safety is at play. However, many drivers do not fully understand how the recall process works, or mistakenly believe that bringing in a vehicle for recall repair means they will have to come out of pocket for the expenses. In honor of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) 2023 Vehicle Safety Recalls Week (March 6 – 12, 2023) and to help inform vehicle owners about the details of safety recalls and what to do if their vehicle is affected, the experts at Kelley Blue Book, a Cox Automotive company, created Recalls 101: What You Need to Know to Stay Safe



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"Vehicle recalls were not on the radar of the average driver until the headline-making massive airbag recalls affected millions of cars in recent years – and even now that people are more familiar with the term, many car owners still do not know what to do or how to find out if a recall affects them," said Brian Moody, executive editor for Kelley Blue Book. "Drivers need to understand that a recall usually will not cost you a dime to repair. Any defect affecting a vehicle's safety can trigger a recall, and car manufacturers must fix defects from recalls for free if the vehicle is less than 16 years old. Car owners should proactively check to see if their vehicle has an open recall and prioritize getting it promptly fixed, for their own safety and the safety of others on the road."

According to NHTSA, there were more than 1,000 safety recalls affecting more than 34 million vehicles and other equipment in the United States in 2021. NHTSA recommends the Spring Daylight Savings Time – which falls on March 12 this year – is the perfect time of year to remember to check if your vehicle has recalls. NHTSA encourages drivers to add "check for safety recalls" to that vital springtime to-do list, which may also include things like checking smoke detector batteries.

Kelley Blue Book's Service Advisor features a free and easy tool for car owners to check to see if their vehicle has an open recall, with the ability to search by vehicle identification number (VIN), make/model or license plate number by visiting https://www.kbb.com/recall/. Beyond checking for vehicle recalls, car owners also can connect with local dealerships to fix the recall for free and get future recall alerts via Kelley Blue Book's recalls page.

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A car recall results from the car manufacturer or the federal government (through NHTSA) determining a vehicle doesn't meet minimum safety standards.

- The defect in question could affect nearly any part, component or system that, if not addressed, reduces the safety of a car.
- It is the responsibility of the carmaker to notify owners of a recall and to make needed fixes; however, taking action to remedy the recall issue falls on the owner.

Recalls for my car: What do I do?

- Recall notices originate from the car manufacturer and tell you exactly what you should (and shouldn't) do. By law, your recall notice should arrive within 60 days of the carmaker filing the recall with NHTSA.
    - Every recall notice must include certain information, including: a description of the defect; any warnings, risks or problems arising if the defect is unresolved; a summary of the manufacturer's proposed action to address the defect; a timeline for repairing the defect; instructions on what you should do to initiate the process; and contact information for the manufacturer if you have any questions.
- Upon receiving a recall notice (or hearing about one), visit https://www.kbb.com/recall/ and enter your VIN to check and see if your particular vehicle is affected.
    - If your car is under a recall order, follow the instructions on the notice, which usually includes contacting a nearby franchised dealership to arrange the needed repairs.
        - The dealership is required by law to complete the repairs in a timely manner; however, know that in the case of a major recall, the availability of parts may dictate the schedule.
    - For cars less than 16 years old, the manufacturer should make the specified repairs for free.
        - However, drivers need to understand that covering any expense/service beyond the recall repair is left to the discretion of the car dealer. For instance, recalls don't mandate free loaner cars or transportation from the dealership to your job, so inquire with the dealer to see if they provide these extras as part of their normal service routine.
    - In many cases, you can continue to drive a car with an outstanding recall order if the issue isn't life-threatening, but experts recommend you prioritize getting the recall repair done as soon as possible.
        - If the recall involves more dangerous issues that make driving the car unsafe, the recall notification will include a "Do Not Drive" notice.

What about used car recalls?

- If you bought your car used, you should be even more proactive in keeping track of recalls.
    - Car manufacturers work hand-in-hand with the Department of Transportation in all states to keep track of the current address of vehicle owners by VIN, so when you register a used car with your current address, there is a trail the manufacturer can follow to issue a recall notice.
        - However, if your vehicle registration doesn't reflect your current address (for example, if you recently moved), the manufacturer may not be able to find you.
- To ensure you are aware of any recall notices applying to your vehicle, do a VIN check at kbb.com/recall at least twice a year.

There currently are a number of electric vehicle (EV) recalls.

- EVs have generated more than their fair share of attention where recalls are concerned, considering there are far fewer of them on roads today compared to gasoline-powered vehicles.
- Many experts attribute EVs' higher-than-normal rate of recalls to all of the new technology they feature.

For more information from Kelley Blue Book about vehicle recalls, including a list of recent EVs, plug-in hybrids, and other vehicle recalls, visit https://www.kbb.com/car-advice/what-do-i-need-to-know-about-recalls/.

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