Air Bag Safety Stats and Facts

FACTS

1. There are three general types of airbag defects (1) failure of an airbag to deploy or (2) an airbag deploys too aggressively, or (3) an airbag deploys at the wrong time.

- The sensor might deploy one airbag, but not all airbags are necessary to protect occupants during a crash.
- The airbag might deploy but do so too late to be effective. Even a fraction of a second late and the airbag could deploy too close to the occupant’s head.
- Airbags deploy at 200 miles per hour and can do a great deal of damage.
- Airbags can harm a vehicle’s occupants in the following ways:
    - Head and neck injuries: When an airbag fails to deploy, the occupant can strike their head on the steering wheel, windows, or other hard interior structures in the vehicles. Airbags would protect those contacts if the airbags had deployed. Failure to deploy can cause head and neck injuries that include facial trauma, brain injuries, skull fractures, and cervical spine fractures.
    - Torso injuries: Injuries to the chest and abdomen are common when an airbag fails to deploy. These can include rib fractures, heart valve and aortic injuries, cardiac rupture, abdominal and organ injuries, and injuries to the spine.

STATS

- In frontal crashes, frontal air bags reduce driver fatalities by 29 percent and fatalities of front-seat passengers age 13 and older by 32 percent.

- NHTSA estimates that the combination of an air bag plus a seat belt reduces the risk of death in frontal crashes by 61 percent.
- From 1987-2015, frontal air bags saved 44,869 lives.
- In 2016, air bags are estimated to have saved 2,756 people.
- Some airbags can have faulty wiring. In 2017, Fiat-Chrysler recalled 1.3 million vehicles because of faulty wiring. Within the wiring harness of the steering wheel, these airbags were improperly wired, which caused the airbags to deploy randomly.
- Mazda recalled 60,000 vehicles relating to a short circuit in the airbag wiring, which means the airbag won’t deploy when it’s supposed to in the event of an accident.
- The Takata airbag recall, which began in 2015, is the largest recall in U.S. history, with an estimated 70 million vehicles to be recalled by 2019. The problem that prompted the recall has been tied to 15 confirmed deaths in the U.S. and more than 250 reported injuries.