

House of Commons

Transport Committee

Vauxhall Zafira fires

The Government's response to the Transport Committee's Tenth Report of Session 2016-17: conclusions and recommendations

Spring 2018 update on actions

Investigations and recalls (para 21):

Action:

The DVSA should seek assurance from Vauxhall that it has taken steps to learn lessons from its poor handling of this issue and must ensure that Vauxhall has put in place robust processes and systems to ensure that potential defects are properly investigated and the root cause properly identified.

Update:

DVSA has sought assurances from Vauxhall that it has a more robust process to deal with any current recalls. It is unable to discuss its handling of the Vauxhall Zafira recall process as it is part of a criminal investigation. Since the TSC hearing, Vauxhall has been taken over by the French PSA Group. There has now been a complete change in personnel, who deal with recalls, within the Vauxhall part of the business. There is now a new but experienced team in place, who are working with DVSA to improve all aspects of recalls.

DVSA has restructured the vehicle safety branch and market surveillance unit teams to enable a greater focus on delivering a better service to those affected by safety recalls and/or type approval issues. This change has involved a move towards an 'account management' style of working with manufacturers meaning that every manufacturer has a single point of contact. This has significantly improved the visibility of defects across the ranges within each fleet and improves the working relationship with the single point of contact.

The initial recall (para 23):

Action:

DVSA is investigating Vauxhall's management of the recall through its account management process, which includes seeking answers to these, and other, questions. This is part of an ongoing investigation and we will report back to the Committee once this has concluded.

Update:

This is part of a current investigation and will be reported on once that has concluded.

Fires in recalled vehicles and further investigation (para 29):

Action:

The apparent lack of notification is one of a number of aspects of Vauxhall's behaviour that DVSA is investigating.

Update:

As above, this is part of a current investigation, which will report to the TSC on conclusion.

Action:

To ensure it is informed of safety defects at the earliest opportunity, DVSA has committed to continue these discussions by having regular meetings through which it will monitor compliance.

Update:

DVSA has established a number of meetings monitoring compliance across the industry. It should be noted that the number of defects reported to DVSA has significantly increased during the year.

Second recall (para 34):

Action:

Continue to engage with Vauxhall and consumers regarding concerns in relation to the electronic climate control heater system. This work is ongoing

Update:

DVSA is satisfied that Vauxhall's remedial action is now satisfactory.

Encouraging defect reporting and sharing information (para 39):

Action:

DVSA will work with DfT to identify participants to take part in a round table discussion that will take place during January 2018. The discussion will identify practical steps to share existing sources of information more effectively, raise awareness of under-reporting and to encourage more reporting of potential safety defects. DVSA will report back to the Committee by 31 March 2018.

Update:

Having started to scope out this action, it was identified that the needs of different sectors of the industry are complex and vary considerably.

DVSA has held meetings with;

- commercial vehicle manufacturers
- private vehicle manufacturers
- SMMT
- aftermarket components; suppliers and distributors

This has been to gain an understanding of how their market functions. Following this, DVSA is creating a 'straw man' recalls process and is arranging further meetings during April and May 2018 to use this with a view creating the draft changes for discussion with full DfT engagement.

DVSA is in full discussions with DfT as it is progressing this, to ensure DfT is satisfied with the progress and direction of discussions.

DVSA is engaging with the commercial vehicle operators to ensure it considers their specific needs in any recall process changes. Commercial vehicle operators have a unique situation whereby the registered keepers of the vehicle, the ones notified by manufacturers of recalls, can be several steps removed from the actual user of the vehicles. This can cause significant issues in ensuring the user of the vehicle is aware of the recall.

Action:

DVSA will explore how it can work with Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) to support its 'product recall' campaign (<https://productrecall.campaign.gov.uk/#check>) and see how DVSA can use it to get its messages across to consumers

Update:

As part of the continuing work to improve the recall success, DVSA is working with BEIS to identify opportunities for further promoting our recalls. BEIS is currently reviewing its management of recalls and DVSA is continuing to work with it. As part of the investigation into Vauxhall, DVSA is working with Trading Standards, part of BEIS, and it is continuing to identify options for improvement within that work.

Improving investigation of vehicle fires (para 44):

Action:

DVSA and DfT will work with the SMMT and motor manufacturers and the motor insurance industry to assess whether manufacturers are making appropriate efforts to get access to vehicles after fires. It will raise this issue when it meets SMMT and motor insurance industry in December 2017. DVSA will report back to the Committee by 31 March 2018.

Update:

DVSA has now gained access to the motor insurance anti-fraud and theft register (MIAFTR) data. It has held discussions with the SMMT, which also has access to this data, along with other data sources, to identify opportunities for earlier identification of defects within vehicles. This work is still underway, since the data provided on the MIAFTR did not have enough detail on its own to identify defects in vehicles where there is a large fleet such as Zafira. DVSA will report on the progress of this work. DVSA will continue to monitor the robustness of manufacturer inspections in all fire related recalls through the audit process. The information of the vehicles, covered by SMMT, is now available on line through GOV.UK and is being incorporated into MOT certificates.

Managing recalls para 46):

Action:

DVSA has expanded its programme of full manufacturer audits and committed to a timetable of planned audits. This means DVSA will assess manufacturers' response to

recalls routinely to review and refine those responses (where necessary) to identify any areas for improvement. DVSA will share the timetable of planned audits with the Committee by 31 March 2018.

Update:

DVSA will carry out audits to support manufacturers to understand their role in managing safety defects and recalling vehicles. These audits will be carried out by their allocated account engineer from within the vehicle safety team and DVSA's internal quality assurance team.

In addition to routine audits a more focused targeted audit will be carried out where non-compliance is identified, providing advice and support to the manufacturer. In all cases follow up visits will be carried out to ensure recommendations have been addressed.

The programme of audits is prepared but might be subject to change if an issue is identified which requires a targeted audit to be completed in a timely manner.

Full audits looking at the defect and recall management will be completed on 13 manufacturers between April 2018 and March 2019. DVSA can supply details to the Committee if required, but the programme of audits is not made public to avoid enabling manufacturers to prepare for them. Manufacturers receive minimum notice of audits.

Managing recalls (para 54):

Action:

DVSA is...in discussions with the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency and the insurance industry to identify opportunities for prompting safety recalls. It is also working with DfT to investigate the possibility of automatic fails, at MOT stage, for the severest unremediated defects.

Update:

Although DVSA continues to talk to DVLA about potential options, progress on this point is unlikely at present. This is because changes to vehicle licensing are DVLA's current priority. To make a defect an MOT 'fail', the information available to the MOT industry would need to be significantly improved in both quality and timeliness. This is being investigated.

Action:

DVSA is working with, and being supported by, the SMMT to add SMMT's information on outstanding recalls to the MOT reminder service. The technical work to add the recall information is due to commence in October 2017 with the new improved service available in early 2018.

Update:

DVSA has completed this action with an MOT reminder service regarding recalls. This will now mean that outstanding recall information will be added to the MOT reminder service.

Resources and powers of the DVSA (para 63):

Action:

DfT and DVSA will review existing powers of enforcement to ensure they are being used effectively. It will map a framework of responsibilities from current processes to consider if there is a robust case and justification for extending them.

Update:

As part of the Vauxhall investigation, DVSA sought Counsel Advice regarding its powers to take prosecution action. This identified that it does not have the authority to prosecute for these offences. To ensure the investigation progressed, DVSA is working with Luton Trading Standards, as Luton Trading Standards does have the authority to prosecute for these potential offences.

In all of the changes and improvements being made to the recall process, DVSA is mapping a framework of responsibilities and powers, identifying areas of concern to be taken forward at the appropriate time.

DVSA has agreed a Memorandum of Understanding with Luton Borough Council Trading Standards to investigate the Vauxhall Zafira fires. Until there are any changes to DVSA's enforcement powers, this model will be used with Trading Standards within other council areas should a similar situation arise. DVSA remains in discussion with DfT on these issues.