



Driver & Vehicle Standards Agency

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Louise Ellman MP
Chair of the Transport Committee
House of Commons
London
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Dear Mrs Ellman

Thank you for your letter of 22 February requesting further information following evidence given to the Transport Committee on 6 February. My answers to your questions are set out below. For ease of reference, I have used your paragraph numbering.

1. Under the Code of Practice and Guide to Recalls, manufacturers are required to provide quarterly updates on recalls that fall within the definition of a 'coded safety' recall. However where we feel it appropriate, we may request interim progress of recalls. Vauxhall is supplying monthly reports on the progress of the Zafira B recall. The last update we received in respect of Vauxhall Zafira Recall – R/2016/104 was 31 January. The completion rate at that date was 69.66%.

Vauxhall is supplying monthly reports on the progress of the Zafira B recall and ad hoc reports when requested.

2. Vauxhall has carried out tests to establish the root cause of the fires and has identified that the fires start in the relay area of the braking system vacuum pump. Vauxhall has also commissioned an independent investigation into the cause of the fires. We have not yet seen the conclusions of this report. Based on its findings, Vauxhall has concluded to date that the problem is caused by water ingress into the braking system vacuum pump relay, causing an electrical short circuit, which leads to a fire. Vauxhall has launched 3 recalls to try to address this:

- first recall was to apply a water repellent compound to the wiring terminals
- second recall was to replace the vacuum pump and the relay (these two components come as one unit)
- third recall is to fit a water deflector to stop water getting into the relay and into the wiring.

At this stage we have no evidence to disagree with the root cause; however, where our concern has arisen is in the remedial action to address the problem. Initially Vauxhall said the problem was with the connections to the relay, and implemented a solution to apply a water repellent compound and identified the problem to be a production line issue. The second recall identified the problem to be within the component and not the production line. Our concern, however, was that just changing the component was not in itself addressing the water ingress problem. Vauxhall has now identified that a water deflector needs to be fitted so has notified us of a third recall to carry this out.

We are still awaiting the technical solution proposal so are unable to comment if we are content that this will address the water ingress problem. We are also still awaiting the outcome of the independent report on the root cause of the fire.

3. More than 80% of recalls are 'volunteered' to DVSA by motor manufacturers. As a percentage of the total approximately 10% of recalls arise from market intelligence and 5-10% result from DVSA defect investigations. Fewer than 5% of defect related recalls originate from the motor trade, trading standards and the police combined.

Our market intelligence comprises the following:

- daily searches on the internet for vehicle safety issues and recalls launched outside the UK and referring any information to the UK office of the manufacturer concerned
- investigating content in daily 'google alerts' set up to warn DVSA of vehicle safety defects / recall issues listed anywhere in the world in this search engine
- investigating Rapex (Rapid Exchange of Information System) submissions made by other EU countries for motor vehicle-related recalls. Usually these relate to issues affecting left-hand drive vehicles and we check with the manufacturer if UK vehicles could be affected
- investigating UK press and media reports of alleged vehicle safety issues
- investigating relevant social media threads; though we have found much of the information we want to see is contained in private member pages. We cannot join these private pages, as we cannot act under an alias or subscribe using inaccurate information

We are looking to update our web pages so that it will encourage members of the public to report safety defects. We are also working with trade bodies and publications for both the motoring public and the trade to promote the benefits of notifying DVSA of potential safety defects. This is planned for later this year.

4. The definition of a safety defect is one where there is a failure owing to design and/or construction, which is likely to affect the safe operation, without prior warning, to the user and which may pose a significant risk to the driver, occupants and others. This defect will be common to a number of products sold for use in the United Kingdom and is not related to the level of, or lack of, maintenance. Safety issues, which arise solely through poor maintenance, are not the responsibility of the manufacturer. Ensuring adequate maintenance provision is in place is the responsibility of the owner and driver of the vehicle.

5. We introduced a qualification for MOT testers and managers that became compulsory for all new entrants to the MOT scheme from 1 September last year.

The qualifications were established on the foundation of National Occupational Standards, developed in conjunction with the industry. The Level 2 qualification in MOT testing for both cars and motorcycles was developed along with a Level 3 qualification for vehicle testing station managers. The qualification is delivered by 3 awarding organisations: City and Guilds, the Institute of the Motor Industry and ABC Awards. These awarding organisations and the qualification are regulated by Ofqual. There are 90 training centres throughout Great Britain approved to deliver these qualifications.

We have also introduced a continuous learning programme, requiring all testers to undergo 3 hours training per year on which they are assessed. All testers will need to pass this assessment each year. To date, approximately 2800 have achieved the tester and manager qualifications.

These qualifications will help provide us with confidence that those starting and conducting MOT testing meet professional standards. The qualification does not provide a direct read across to vehicle maintenance – although it would be expected that this MOT qualification will have the effect of increasing professionalism in the industry. It is noted that there are industry led professional qualifications and standards that do relate more directly to vehicle maintenance.

I hope this reply addresses the questions you have raised. Should you need any further information please get in touch again.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gareth Llewellyn', written in a cursive style.

Gareth Llewellyn
Chief Executive