

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 18, 2018

The Honorable Elaine Chao
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Chao:

We write seeking critical details regarding the new warning from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) that 2006 Ford Rangers pose “an immediate risk to safety” and that owners are urged “not to drive” these vehicles because they contain high-risk defective Takata airbags. This “do not drive” instruction, issued over two years after the first fatality involving a 2006 Ford Ranger and six months after the second fatality, underscores the need for NHTSA to swiftly and proactively address the deadly defect in Takata airbags and provide consumers with appropriate notice regarding the defect’s serious potential risk to life.

As you know, 2004-2006 Ford Rangers have all been recalled for their defective Takata airbags, but none of these recalls had previously been identified as high risk, or accompanied with a “do not drive” instruction or important consumer remedies such as free mobile repair, towing, and loaner cars. As reported by *Reuters*, Ford claims that the two deaths involving 2006 Rangers had air bag inflators built on the same day, suggesting that these airbags may have been improperly manufactured.¹ However, this information does not address the root cause of what makes defective Takata airbags in 2006 Ranger pickups so deadly.

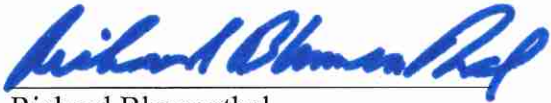
Thus, we urge NHTSA to immediately take steps to identify exactly why defective Takata airbags in 2006 Ford Rangers pose a heightened risk to drivers, and determine if the same risk factors may be present in other model year vehicles that have defective Takata airbags. We ask that you use all tools at your disposal to require Ford to extend the “do not drive” instruction and urgent consumer remedies to all affected Ford Ranger owners unless Ford can explain why other model years recalled in this group do not pose the same risk to life as 2006 Ford Rangers.

Finally, it has also been reported by *Reuters* that Mazda intends to conduct an updated recall and “do not drive” warning for some 2006 Mazda B-Series trucks, which were built by Ford and are similar to the Ranger. We are troubled that there is any delay in issuing this notice and ask that you expedite this matter. In addition, we ask that you ensure that all affected Mazda B-Series owners similarly receive “do not drive” instructions, accompanied with free mobile repair, towing, and loaner cars as part of the consumer remedy unless they can demonstrate that these vehicles do not pose a risk to automobile safety.

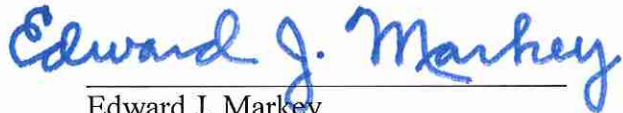
¹ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ford-takata/ford-urges-2900-pickup-owners-to-stop-driving-after-new-takata-death-idUSKBN1F02GN>

For the safety of all affected vehicle owners, their passengers, and drivers who share the same road with them, we ask that you attend to this matter immediately. We respectfully request a response by January 24, 2018.

Sincerely,



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senate



Edward J. Markey
United States Senate

CC:

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