VIN RECALL CHECK

How to run a **VIN recall check**: look up open recalls by VIN or license plate, read an NHTSA recall record, get the free dealer repair, act on Park It and Takata airbag warnings, run a used car recall check, and compare the **Carfax recall check**.

Free	60 days	$14.99
VIN recall check at carcheckervin.com	the deadline to mail owner letters after a recall filing	full history report that lists open recalls

CarCheckerVIN

www.carcheckervin.com/recall-check

Free recall check · VIN decoder · Vehicle history reports

START HERE

ABOUT THIS VIN RECALL CHECK GUIDE

A **VIN recall check** tells you whether one particular vehicle has a safety defect that was never fixed. This guide explains how recalls begin, how to check for recalls on your car or on one you're about to buy, what the free federal lookup leaves out, and what the law says about free repairs, refunds for repairs you already paid for, and used-car sales.

It is published by **CarCheckerVIN (carcheckervin.com)**, which runs a free recall check and sells vehicle history reports. Legal points come from the federal vehicle safety statute (49 U.S.C. Chapter 301), NHTSA's recall regulations (49 CFR Parts 573 and 577), the FTC's Used Car Rule and Tennessee's recall disclosure law. Every recall example was read from NHTSA's public recall records in November 2026. This is general information, not legal advice.

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FREE RECALL CHECK

Check a VIN while you read

Enter a 17-character VIN or a U.S. license plate at **carcheckervin.com/recall-check** to see open NHTSA safety recalls, each with its campaign number, defect summary, safety risk and free remedy. No card, no sign-up. A full vehicle history report, which also lists open recalls, is $14.99.

How to use this guide

Checking your own car

Chapters 3, 6, 8 and 9: run the check, act on urgent warnings, book the repair and claim money back.

Buying a used car

Chapters 3, 11, 12 and 13: run a used car recall check, know the dealer rules and add a history report.

Selling, leasing, renting

Chapters 10, 11 and 14: who gets recall letters, what sellers must do and how rental fleets are handled.

BUYER'S SHORTCUT

WHERE TO CHECK RECALLS & WHERE TO BUY THE REPORT

Checking a VIN for open recalls is free everywhere that matters; the rest of a used car's story is not. Here is where to do each, so you never pay for public recall data.

OUR PICK

CarCheckerVIN · www.carcheckervin.com

- **Free recall check** by VIN or U.S. license plate
- Each open recall with its **campaign number**, defect, risk and free remedy
- **Free history preview** for the same VIN, no credit card
- **Full vehicle history report: $14.99**, no subscription
- **Packs:** 3 for $35.99, 5 for $54.99, 10 for $89.99 ($9 a report)
- Title brands, NMVTIS title records, odometer readings, owner count
- Liens, impounds, insurance total-loss records, auction sales with photos
- Open recalls, service records, factory specs and market value

Run a free VIN recall check at carcheckervin.com/recall-check →

Free recall lookups vs paid reports

Where	Cost	Best for	Limits
CarCheckerVIN recall check	Free; report $14.99	Open recalls by VIN, plate or a list of VINs, plus a free history preview	Recalls only; title and mileage records are in the report
NHTSA lookup (nhtsa.gov/recalls)	Free	The official open-recall status, by VIN or plate	Skips recalls over 15 years old unless the maker offers more, some small and ultra-luxury makers, and very new recalls
Maker's owner site or a franchised dealer	Free	Parts availability and booking the repair	One brand at a time
Carfax report or Car Care app	Report widely quoted at $44.99; app free	Service history; recall alerts on a car you own	Paying for a report only to see recalls buys public data

How to choose: four questions

- ☐ **Do you own the car?** A free recall check plus a note in your calendar to repeat it is enough.
- ☐ **Is the car older than 15 years?** Also ask a franchised dealer, because the federal lookup may not list old campaigns.
- ☐ **Buying?** A recall check can't show salvage brands, rollbacks or liens; add a **history report**.
- ☐ **Several cars?** Check them all free and buy reports for the shortlist; a 3-pack ($35.99) costs less than one Carfax.

Dealers and fleets get wholesale pricing, bulk API access and white-label reports at **carcheckervin.com/dealers**.

CHAPTER 1

WHAT A VEHICLE RECALL IS (AND ISN'T)

A safety recall is a manufacturer's legally required campaign to tell owners about a safety problem and fix it at no charge. It is a filed, numbered action, not a forum rumor or a service tip, and it follows the vehicle from owner to owner until the repair is done.

The two things that trigger a recall

A defect related to safety

Federal law defines motor vehicle safety as protection against unreasonable risk of crashes caused by design, construction or performance, and of death or injury in a crash. It includes **nonoperational safety**, so a car that can catch fire while parked can be recalled (49 U.S.C. § 30102).

A failure to meet a safety standard

Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards set minimum performance. When a maker decides in good faith that a vehicle or part doesn't comply, it must notify NHTSA and owners and remedy it, injuries or not (49 U.S.C. § 30118(c)).

Recall, service bulletin, campaign: not the same thing

What it's called	What it is	In a VIN recall check?	Who pays
Safety recall	A legal duty to notify owners and remedy a safety defect or noncompliance	Yes, while open	The manufacturer; free to the owner
Technical service bulletin (TSB)	The maker's repair guidance to its dealers about a known fault	No	Depends on warranty and the maker's policy
Goodwill or satisfaction campaign	A voluntary program set by the maker	No	Terms set by the maker
NHTSA investigation	An agency inquiry into a possible defect	No; it may lead to a recall	–

Bulletins aren't secret: makers must give NHTSA copies of their defect communications to dealers and owners, and NHTSA must post them publicly (49 U.S.C. § 30166(f)). A bulletin isn't a free repair you can claim.

Vehicles of every kind are recalled, and so is equipment such as tires and child seats (Chapter 8b). A recall may cover only cars from one plant or date range, which is why the VIN matters.

Open recall vs completed recall

Open

Owner notice was sent and the remedy hasn't been done (49 U.S.C. § 30120(f)(2)). It stays open through every sale.

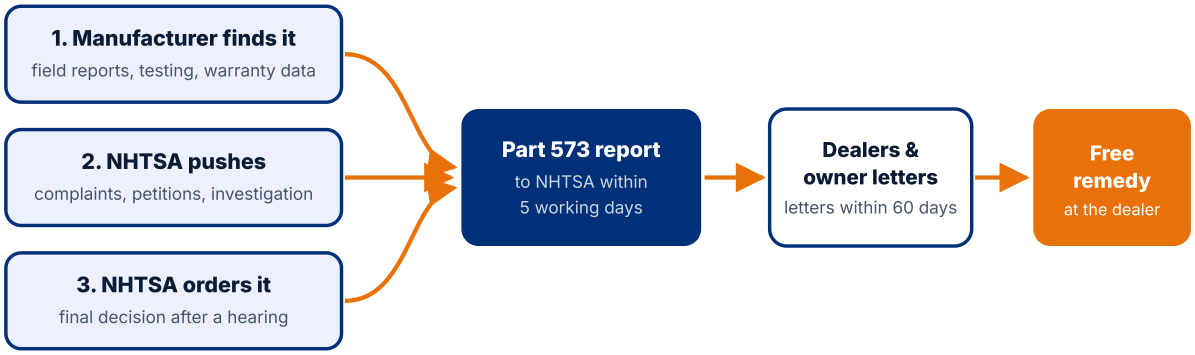
Completed

The remedy was done and logged against that VIN. A clean check means nothing is outstanding, not that the car was never recalled.

CHAPTER 2

HOW A RECALL IS ISSUED: MANUFACTURER VS NHTSA

Most recalls are filed by the manufacturer. Some are filed only after NHTSA pushes, and the law lets the agency order one when a maker won't act. Whatever the route, every recall ends the same way: a numbered campaign, letters to owners and a free remedy.



Route 1: the manufacturer recalls on its own

The law puts the first duty on the maker. When a manufacturer learns that a vehicle or part has a defect and decides in good faith that it relates to safety, or decides that it doesn't meet a safety standard, it must notify NHTSA and then owners, purchasers and dealers (49 U.S.C. § 30118(c)). NHTSA's rule sets the clock: the defect and noncompliance report, known as the **Part 573 report**, is due no more than **5 working days** after that determination, with updates due within 5 working days of new facts (49 CFR 573.6).

Route 2: NHTSA pushes and the maker files

NHTSA's Office of Defects Investigation reviews owner complaints and manufacturer data, opens investigations and presses makers to act; the maker still files the recall. In the Takata case, NHTSA's investigation file says that at its insistence all ten affected vehicle makers started regional recalls within about two weeks (Chapter 7). Recall records in NHTSA's database show the investigation number that led to them, such as EA15001 on many Takata campaigns.

Route 3: NHTSA orders the recall

If the agency makes an initial decision that a vehicle has a safety defect or fails a standard, it must tell the maker and publish it in the Federal Register. A final decision comes only after the manufacturer and any interested person can present information and arguments; NHTSA can then order the maker to notify owners and remedy the vehicles (49 U.S.C. § 30118(a)–(b)).

Anyone can ask NHTSA to act

Any interested person may petition NHTSA to open a defect proceeding (49 CFR 552.3); it grants or denies within 120 days (552.8).

The "inconsequential" exit

A maker can seek exemption when a defect is inconsequential to safety, granted only after Federal Register notice and comment (§§ 30118(d), 30120(h)).

FROM DEFECT TO REPAIR: THE RECALL TIMELINE

Federal rules attach a deadline to most steps between a defect being found and your car being fixed. A real example: Kia filed recall 24V407 (a front power seat motor that can overheat in 2020–2024 Telluride SUVs) with NHTSA on June 6, 2024, and owner letters were mailed on July 30, 2024.

#	Step	Rule	Deadline or requirement
1	Maker determines a safety defect or noncompliance exists	49 CFR 573.6	Part 573 report to NHTSA within 5 working days
2	Recall appears in NHTSA's public records	NHTSA database	Campaign number, component, summary, consequence and remedy, searchable by VIN
3	Dealers are notified	49 CFR 577.7(c)	Within 3 business days of the Part 573 report when the defect is an immediate and substantial threat (5 if not sent electronically); otherwise on the maker's filed schedule
4	Draft owner letter goes to NHTSA	49 CFR 577.5(a)	At least 5 federal business days before mailing begins
5	Owner letters mailed	49 CFR 577.7(a)	First-class mail, no later than 60 days after the Part 573 report
6	Remedy not ready at first letter	49 CFR 577.7(a)(1)	A second letter once the remedy is available
7	Owner presents the vehicle	49 U.S.C. § 30120(c)	Failing to repair adequately within 60 days is prima facie evidence of unreasonable delay, and unreasonable delay obliges the maker to replace or refund
8	Progress reports	49 U.S.C. § 30118(f)	Quarterly for 8 consecutive quarters, then yearly for 3 years
9	Too few cars fixed	§ 30119(e); 49 CFR 577.10	NHTSA may order a second notice, more notices and extra efforts to locate owners
10	Completion rates made public	49 U.S.C. § 30120(k)	NHTSA publishes a yearly list of completion rates for campaigns with 8 quarterly reports

Why a recall can be open with no fix available

The owner letter has to name the **earliest date** the defect will be remedied free of charge, and that date is the earliest that parts and facilities can reasonably be expected to be ready (49 U.S.C. § 30119(a)(5), (b)). NHTSA can disapprove the date. Turning up at the dealer before it doesn't start the 60-day repair clock (§ 30120(c)(2)). In the meantime the letter must tell you what precautions, if any, reduce the chance of the failure before the repair (49 CFR 577.5(e)(4)): parking outside, not using a feature, or not driving at all.

CHECK STATUS

A recall can show in a VIN check weeks before your letter arrives. See what's open today at **carcheckervin.com/recall-check**, then ask a franchised dealer about parts.

CHAPTER 3

HOW TO DO A VIN RECALL CHECK, STEP BY STEP

A **recall check by VIN** takes about a minute and costs nothing. The same steps work whether you want to check for recalls on your car or on one you've only seen in an ad.

Step 0: find the VIN on the vehicle



Dashboard
Read it through the windshield at the lower driver's-side corner.



Door-jamb label
The driver's door pillar carries the certification label with the VIN.



Title, registration, insurance
Useful at home, but check it against the car itself.

Since the 1981 model year every VIN has 17 characters and never uses the letters I, O or Q (49 CFR Part 565). Copy it from the car, not from the listing: ads are where typos and swapped VINs turn up.

The seven steps

1. **Enter the VIN** at carcheckervin.com/recall-check. No VIN handy? Search by U.S. license plate instead (Chapter 5).
2. **Cross-check at nhtsa.gov/recalls**, the free federal lookup, when you're about to buy or a result surprises you.
3. **Read every open campaign**, not just the count: component, consequence and remedy decide how urgent each one is (Chapter 3b).
4. **Look for urgent flags.** Park It means don't drive; Park Outside means a fire risk even when parked (Chapter 6).
5. **Ask the brand.** A franchised dealer or the maker's owner site can confirm parts availability and list campaigns the federal lookup skips, such as ones older than 15 years.
6. **Book the free repair** with the VIN and campaign number, and keep the dated repair order (Chapter 8).
7. **Run the VIN again later.** Confirm the campaign now shows as remedied, and catch anything new.

Why the VIN beats year, make and model

Recalls often cover a production window, not a model year. NHTSA's record for Honda's 15V370 passenger airbag recall, for example, lists 2001–2005 Civics built from March 21, 2000 to January 20, 2005, with different date ranges for other models. Two cars from the same model year can get opposite answers. Only a VIN match settles it.

HOW TO READ A RECALL RECORD

Every campaign in NHTSA's recall database follows the same layout. Here is a real one, shortened from NHTSA's public record.

NHTSA Campaign **26V430000**

PARK OUTSIDE · Kia recall SC374

Manufacturer	Kia America, Inc.
Report received	July 2, 2026
Vehicles	Certain 2020–2024 Kia Telluride
Component	Seats: front assembly: power adjust
Summary	The front power seat motor can overheat because of a stuck seat slide knob or an improper repair under earlier recall 24V407, which can cause a fire while parked or driving.
Remedy	Park outside and away from structures until repaired. Dealers install an electronic fuse assembly free of charge. Letters expected to be mailed August 13, 2026. Replaces 24V407; cars already repaired under it need the new remedy.

What each field tells you

Field	Meaning	What to do with it
Campaign number	NHTSA's ID; dealers use it to order parts and log the fix. The maker's own code (here SC374) also works	Quote it, with the VIN, when you book
Report received	When the maker filed with NHTSA	Very recent? Parts may be scarce
Component	The system involved: airbags, brakes, fuel, steering, wiring, software	Rank urgency; restraints, fire and steering first
Summary & consequence	What fails, when, and the risk	Decide whether to keep driving
Remedy	The fix, its timing and any interim advice	Follow the interim advice today
Flags	Park It, Park Outside, or an over-the-air (OTA) software fix	See Chapter 6

Phrases worth noticing: "letters are expected to be mailed" means a new campaign whose remedy may be weeks away; "supersedes" or "replaces" means an earlier recall was folded in and a past repair may not count (Chapter 7b); "over-the-air software update" means the fix may arrive without a dealer visit.

ON CARCHECKERVIN

For each open campaign, **carcheckervin.com/recall-check** shows the component, campaign number, defect summary, safety risk, free remedy, maker and date.

CHAPTER 4

THE NHTSA RECALL LOOKUP: WHAT IT COVERS AND WHAT IT MISSES

The **NHTSA recall lookup** at nhtsa.gov/recalls is the official public reference for open safety recalls in the United States. It is excellent at one job and silent on everything else a buyer needs.

What it covers

- Search by 17-character VIN or by license plate
- Safety recalls not yet repaired on that exact vehicle
- The campaign details from the maker's filing: component, risk, remedy
- Recall remedies are free at franchised dealers

What it doesn't show

- Recalls more than 15 years old, unless the maker offers more
- Some small vehicle makers, including some ultra-luxury brands
- Very new recalls not yet loaded
- Any title, mileage, loss, lien or owner history: that's not recall data

Each gap, and how to fill it

Gap	Who it affects	How to fill it
Recalls over 15 years old	Older daily drivers, classics, cheap first cars	A franchised dealer or the maker's owner site; ask for the campaign by VIN
Small and ultra-luxury makers	Low-volume brands and specialty builders	Contact the maker or its importer directly
Brand-new recalls	Campaigns filed in the last few days	Ask a dealer, and repeat the VIN check later
Completed recalls	Anyone verifying a seller's "it's been fixed"	The dated dealer repair order naming the campaign
Vehicle history	Every used-car buyer	A vehicle history report: title brands, odometer readings, total-loss and auction records

The 15-year cutoff is about the lookup, not your rights

Two different 15-year rules get mixed up. The **lookup** generally stops displaying recalls more than 15 years old. Separately, the **law** doesn't require a free remedy if the vehicle was bought by its first purchaser more than 15 calendar years before the recall notice or order (49 U.S.C. § 30120(g)). That test is measured at the date of the notice, not today. A car recalled when it was ten years old still has a recall that was issued inside the free-remedy window, even if the car is now twenty, so ask the maker rather than assuming an old recall has lapsed.

NHTSA lookup vs CarCheckerVIN: use both when it matters

Both are free and both search by VIN or U.S. plate. CarCheckerVIN adds a paste-a-list search for several cars, a free history preview and a $14.99 full report that lists open recalls. For a purchase, run the VIN at carcheckervin.com/recall-check and at nhtsa.gov/recalls on the same day. If they ever differ, ring a franchised dealer: it works from the maker's system that authorizes the repair.

CHAPTER 5

RECALL BY LICENSE PLATE & OTHER CAR RECALL LOOKUPS

No VIN to hand? A **recall by license plate** search finds the VIN registered to that plate first, then checks the VIN. It's the quickest **car recall lookup** when all you have is a photo of a car in a lot.

How a plate recall search works

1. **Enter the plate exactly** and choose the issuing state. Plate formats repeat across states, so the state matters.
2. **Confirm the vehicle.** The search returns the VIN and the decoded year, make and model. If they don't match the car you're looking at, stop: plates move between cars.
3. **Read the open recalls** exactly as you would for a VIN search.
4. **Before money changes hands,** read the VIN on the dashboard and door label, and run that VIN too.

NHTSA's lookup and **carcheckervin.com/recall-check** both accept U.S. plates; see also **carcheckervin.com/license-plate-lookup**. Neither shows the owner: the Driver's Privacy Protection Act of 1994 (18 U.S.C. § 2721 et seq.) limits personal data from state motor vehicle records to permitted uses.

Other places to look up recalls

OFFICIAL · FREE

NHTSA recall lookup and hotline

Search at nhtsa.gov/recalls, or call NHTSA's Vehicle Safety Hotline at 1-888-327-4236 (TTY 1-800-424-9153), the number printed in NHTSA's recall records.

BRAND · FREE

Manufacturer owner sites and franchised dealers

They read from the maker's own system: the best source for parts availability, recalls older than 15 years and brand service campaigns that aren't federal recalls.

OWNER APP · FREE

CARFAX Car Care

Carfax's free app says it notifies you if a recall is issued on a vehicle in your garage. It's built for cars you own, not for vetting one you're buying (Chapter 13).

CARCHECKERVIN.COM

CarCheckerVIN recall check

Free by VIN or plate, or paste a list of VINs to check several cars at once, with a free history preview. Fleets and dealers: bulk API access and wholesale reports at **carcheckervin.com/dealers**.

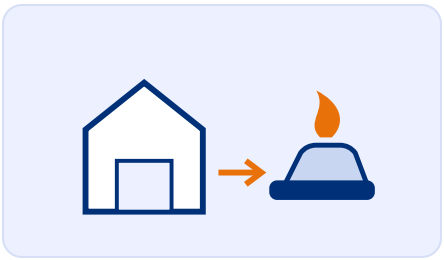
CHAPTER 6

PARK IT, PARK OUTSIDE & DO-NOT-DRIVE RECALLS

Most recalls can wait for a convenient appointment. A few can't. NHTSA's recall records carry flags that pick out the urgent ones, plus a third flag for fixes that arrive as software.



Park It
Do not drive until the remedy is done.



Park Outside
Fire risk even when parked: keep it outdoors, away from buildings.



Over the air
A software remedy sent to the car, often without a dealer visit.

Park It: what a do not drive recall means

A do-not-drive recall is one where the owner notice tells you to stop driving until the repair is done. Tennessee's dealer law (Chapter 11) defines it as a recall notice that unconditionally instructs the owner to stop driving until the remedy is performed. NHTSA's records mark these campaigns **Park It**. A real example: in recalls 18V022 and 18V023, Ford asked owners of certain 2006 Ranger pickups **not to drive** until the driver and passenger airbag inflators were replaced, in campaigns NHTSA's records link to its Takata investigation; the recall was expanded in February 2018 to 33,310 trucks. Call the dealer before moving such a vehicle and ask how they want it brought in.

Park Outside: when the risk is fire

A Park Outside flag means the defect can start a fire even when the vehicle is off. Kia's 2020–2024 Telluride seat-motor recalls (24V407, now replaced by 26V430) and an earlier tow-hitch harness recall on 2020–2022 Tellurides (22V626) all advise owners to **park outside and away from structures** until the repair is complete. Federal law counts nonoperational safety as safety, so parked-car fires are squarely recall territory.

Over the air: the recall that comes to you

Some remedies are software. In recall 22V844, for taillights that could intermittently fail on certain 2023 Model 3 and 2020–2023 Model Y cars, Tesla released a free over-the-air update; 8 of the 12 recall records NHTSA listed for the 2023 Model 3 when we checked in November 2026 carry the OTA flag. An OTA recall is still a recall: check the software version or the maker's app to confirm it installed.

Flag	Meaning	Do this today
Park It	Do not drive until repaired	Leave it parked; call the dealer about getting it in
Park Outside	Fire risk while parked or driving	Park outdoors, away from homes and garages; book promptly
OTA	Fix delivered as a software update	Install the update; confirm the version

CHAPTER 7

THE TAKATA AIRBAG RECALL

The **Takata airbag recall** changed how many people think about recalls: one supplier's part, ten vehicle manufacturers, and campaigns that kept growing for years. Every fact on this page comes from NHTSA's own investigation file and recall records.

What goes wrong

When the airbag deploys, the inflator can rupture and propel metal fragments into the passenger compartment. NHTSA's recall records describe the cause in later campaigns as **propellant degradation occurring after long-term exposure to high absolute humidity, temperature and temperature cycling**, and the consequence as sharp metal fragments striking the driver or other occupants, resulting in serious injury or death.

How NHTSA pushed the recalls

When	What NHTSA's records say happened
June 2014	NHTSA opens investigation PE14-016 after six inflator ruptures in vehicles from five makers, all operated mostly in Florida or Puerto Rico.
About two weeks later	At NHTSA's insistence, all ten vehicle makers using similar inflators start regional recalls covering Florida, Puerto Rico, Hawaii and the U.S. Virgin Islands.
Late 2014	Passenger-inflator recalls widen to other high-humidity areas. Honda's 14V700 lists vehicles sold or ever registered in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, Texas, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Saipan, Guam and American Samoa.
Before Feb 2015	After driver-inflator ruptures in California and North Carolina, outside the humid regions, NHTSA asks the five makers using those driver inflators to recall nationwide.
Feb 24, 2015	NHTSA upgrades to engineering analysis EA15-001, estimating 11.5 million vehicles at that point.
July 1, 2015	Honda's driver-inflator recall 15V320 begins, covering models such as the 2001–2007 Accord and 2001–2005 Civic.
January 2018	Ford tells owners of certain 2006 Ranger pickups not to drive them until the inflators are replaced (18V022 and 18V023, both linked to EA15-001).
2019–2021	Replacement inflators fitted as remedy or service parts are recalled too (Chapter 7b).

Companies named in NHTSA's investigation

Takata · Honda · Toyota · Nissan · Mazda · Subaru · Mitsubishi · BMW · General Motors · Chrysler (FCA US) · Ford

That list is the investigation's 2015 starting point; individual campaigns have since added and replaced vehicles many times. Because the scope kept shifting, the only reliable answer for one car is a VIN recall check on that car.

TAKATA CHECK

Check any VIN or plate for open Takata and other airbag campaigns at **carcheckervin.com/recall-check**. If one is open, read the interim advice and book the replacement now; with a Park It flag, don't drive the car at all.

CHAPTER 7 CONT.

REPEAT AND REPLACED RECALLS: WHEN “FIXED” ISN’T FINAL

A completed recall usually closes the story. Sometimes it doesn’t: the remedy part itself can be recalled, or a new campaign can replace an old one and require the work again.

Real examples from NHTSA’s records

Campaign	Vehicles	What happened
19V182	Many 2001–2016 Honda and Acura models	Cars given a replacement driver inflator under an earlier Takata remedy, or as a service part, were recalled again: a manufacturing error means it may explode. Dealers fit an alternate inflator.
19V499 & 19V501	Honda and Acura, 2001–2014 model years	Inflators used as remedy or service parts may explode due to propellant degradation.
21V081	Ford, Mercury and Lincoln models, 2004–2014	Vehicles that may have a frontal inflator fitted as a replacement service part that can explode due to propellant degradation; dealers inspect and replace as needed.
26V430	2020–2024 Kia Telluride	Replaces seat-motor recall 24V407; vehicles already repaired under the earlier recall need the new remedy.

What “supersedes” and “replaces” mean for you

When a record says it supersedes or replaces an earlier recall, the old campaign was folded into the new one, so your car can show one completed and the other open. Run the VIN even when the seller shows a receipt. Ford’s 17V787 and 17V788, for example, superseded earlier 2004–2006 Ranger recalls with a final repair.

Airbags and service parts

Several of these campaigns target **replacement service parts**, so a car whose airbag module was replaced after a repair can carry a recalled inflator even if its original was never involved. The VIN check reflects the maker’s records; the dealer’s records and your mechanic show what was actually installed.

Questions to ask a seller

- [ ] Has any recall work been done? May I see the dated repair orders?
- [ ] Does each repair order name the campaign the VIN check shows as completed?
- [ ] Were the airbags ever replaced outside a recall?
- [ ] Did you receive any recall letters you haven’t acted on?
- [ ] Will you complete any open recall before I take delivery, and put that in writing?
- [ ] If parts aren’t available, will you adjust the price or the delivery date?

RECHECK

Run the VIN again on the day you buy at **carcheckervin.com/recall-check**; last month’s clean result is last month’s.

CHAPTER 8

GETTING THE FREE REPAIR: THE DEALER REMEDY PROCESS

Federal law puts the cost of a recall on the manufacturer. In practice the work is done by the brand's franchised dealers, who are paid by the maker. Here's how to get it done smoothly, and what to do if it stalls.

The manufacturer picks the remedy

When a recall is required, the maker must remedy the vehicle without charge when it is presented, choosing one of three ways: **repair** it; **replace** it with an identical or reasonably equivalent vehicle; or **refund** the purchase price, less a reasonable allowance for depreciation (49 U.S.C. § 30120(a)). For equipment such as tires or child seats the options are repair, replacement or refund. Every recall cited in this guide uses a repair or an inspection, but the owner letter has to say which remedy applies.

Booking the repair

1. **Note the campaign number** from your VIN recall check and keep the owner letter if you have one.
2. **Call a franchised dealer for the brand.** You don't need to be the original owner; the free-remedy duty applies when the vehicle is presented.
3. **Ask about parts** before you drive over. If the remedy isn't available yet, ask to be notified and follow the interim advice in the letter.
4. **Ask how long it takes.** The owner letter must include the maker's estimate of the labor time (49 CFR 577.5(g)).
5. **Get a repair order** that names the campaign and shows no charge for the recall work. Keep it with the car's papers.
6. **Re-run the VIN** after a while to confirm the campaign shows as remedied.

What to bring

The VIN, the campaign number, the owner letter if you have one, and any earlier repair orders for the same system. If the remedy isn't available yet, ask the dealer to record your VIN and contact details so you hear when parts arrive. If the visit goes wrong, Chapter 8c covers what to do next.

Why your dealer should mention open recalls: federal law conditions the maker's reimbursement to dealers for free recall work on the dealer telling customers about any open recall each time it services that maker's vehicles, where the franchise agreement requires it (49 U.S.C. § 30120(f)). Ask anyway at every service visit.

ARE RECALL REPAIRS FREE? THE EXCEPTIONS

Are recall repairs free? In nearly every case, yes: the remedy is the manufacturer's cost, however many owners the car has had. The statute lists a few exceptions worth knowing before you're surprised at a service counter.

Situation	Free remedy required?	Rule
Any owner, any number of previous owners	**Yes**	49 U.S.C. § 30120(a)
Vehicle first bought more than 15 calendar years before the recall notice or order	**Not required**	§ 30120(g)(1); the maker may still offer it
Tire first bought more than 5 calendar years before the notice	**Not required**	§ 30120(g)(1)
Recalled tire not presented within 180 days of the notice (or of notice that replacements exist)	**Not required**	§ 30120(b)
Defect exempted by NHTSA as inconsequential to safety	**No recall remedy**	§ 30120(h)
NHTSA order restrained or set aside by a court	**Paused**	§ 30120(g)(2)
You paid for the repair before the recall	**Reimbursable**	§ 30120(d); 49 CFR 573.13 (Chapter 9)

The 15-year rule in plain terms

The clock runs from the **first purchase** to the date the recall notice is given or NHTSA's order is issued, whichever is earlier. Illustration: a car first sold in 2010 and recalled in 2022 (12 years) gets the remedy free; one first sold in 2005 and recalled in 2022 (17 years) need not. Then the letter must say the maker isn't required to remedy free and describe anything it will do voluntarily (49 CFR 577.5(g)(2)).

"Free" covers the recall, not the visit

- **Covered:** the parts and labor the campaign specifies, or the replacement or refund the maker chose.
- **Not covered:** unrelated repairs or maintenance the service desk recommends while the car is in.
- **Read the repair order** before you sign: the recall line should show no charge.

What federal law doesn't promise

Section 30120 requires a free remedy; it says nothing about loaner cars, mobile repairs or towing. Ask the dealer or the maker's customer line whether it offers any of these for your campaign, especially if the recall is a do-not-drive one or parts are on backorder.

FREE TO CHECK, FREE TO FIX

Run the VIN at **carcheckervin.com/recall-check** and take the campaign number to a franchised dealer. Checking costs nothing; neither does the remedy in all but the cases above.

CHAPTER 8 CONT.

WHEN THE REPAIR STALLS: COMPLAINTS, REPLACEMENT OR REFUND

Most recall visits are routine. When the dealer says no or the parts never come, federal law gives owners clear rights and a regulator to call.

The rights printed in your recall letter

The owner letter must tell you how to complain to NHTSA if the manufacturer, distributor or dealer fails or is unable to remedy free of charge, or doesn't remedy within a reasonable time. For repairs, NHTSA's rule says that is not longer than **60 days** after your first attempt to get the repair following the earliest repair date in the letter, unless NHTSA extends it (49 CFR 577.5(g)(1)(vii)). You can write to the Administrator, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 1200 New Jersey Ave. SE, Washington, DC 20590, or call the Vehicle Safety Hotline at 1-888-327-4236 (TTY 1-800-424-9153).

When repair fails: replace or refund

If a repair isn't done adequately within a reasonable time, the maker must replace the vehicle free with an identical or reasonably equivalent one, or refund the price less depreciation. Missing 60 days from presentation is prima facie evidence of unreasonable delay (49 U.S.C. § 30120(c)).

NHTSA can step in

NHTSA can hold a hearing on whether a maker met its remedy duties and order it to act (§ 30120(e)). If there's a risk of serious injury or death, it can force a slow program to speed up with more parts sources or repair sites (§ 30120(c)(3)).

An escalation ladder that works

1. **Get the reason in writing** from the service manager: parts on order, remedy not released, or campaign not applicable to your VIN.
2. **Check the dates.** Before the letter's earliest remedy date there's no 60-day clock; after it, the clock runs from the day you present the car.
3. **Try another franchised dealer** for the brand; parts and workload differ between stores.
4. **Call the maker's customer line** (in your letter) with the VIN and recall number.
5. **Complain to NHTSA** by phone or by mail, giving the campaign number, dates and dealer names.
6. **Past 60 days?** Write to the manufacturer asking for a replacement or refund under 49 U.S.C. § 30120(c), and keep a copy.

When the 60-day clock doesn't run

Taking the car in before the notice's earliest remedy date doesn't count as presenting it, and NHTSA can extend the 60 days by order if it publishes the reason in the Federal Register first (§ 30120(c)(2)). Keep every dated repair order, letter and the names of people you spoke to.

CHAPTER 9

REIMBURSEMENT FOR A REPAIR YOU ALREADY PAID FOR

Paid for a fix, and then it was recalled? Every maker's remedy program must include a plan to reimburse owners who paid within a reasonable time before the recall (49 U.S.C. § 30120(d)); 49 CFR 573.13 sets the minimum terms.

Which repairs qualify

Question	What 49 CFR 573.13 says
Earliest qualifying date	No later than one year before the maker's Part 573 report, or when NHTSA opened an Engineering Analysis if earlier; for a noncompliance, the first test or observation suggesting it
Latest qualifying date	No earlier than 10 days after the last owner letters were mailed
Type of repair	May be excluded if not the same type (repair, replacement, refund) as the recall remedy, not aimed at the defect, or not reasonably necessary; it needn't be identical to the maker's remedy
Warranty period	Costs warranty would have covered may be excluded, unless a franchised dealer denied coverage or the warranty repair failed
Vehicle age	Not required if first bought over 10 calendar years before the notice (5 for tires)

The most the maker may ask you to send

- Your name and mailing address
- Make, model, model year and VIN
- The NHTSA or manufacturer recall number
- Who owned the vehicle when it was repaired
- A receipt (original or copy) showing the repair addressed the recalled problem and the total paid
- If repaired during warranty, proof the dealer refused warranty cover or the warranty fix failed

How much, how fast

The amount

At least the lesser of what you paid, or parts (may be capped at list price) plus labor at local rates, fees and taxes, which may not be limited. Paid by check or cash.

The timing

The maker must act within 60 days. A denial must state clear reasons; an incomplete claim gets a list of what's missing and a chance to resubmit, also within 60 days.

NHTSA won't referee

Disputes over a denied or partly paid claim are between you and the manufacturer; NHTSA says it will not mediate them (49 CFR 573.13(j)). The maker must make its plan available on request: ask for it, send your claim to the address it names (or a designated dealer) and mark your calendar for 60 days.

CHAPTER 10

RECALL NOTICES: HOW OWNERS ARE TOLD & WHY LETTERS GO ASTRAY

The recall system still runs on the mail. Every link in that chain can break when a car changes hands, which is why **open recalls** pile up on used cars and why checking the VIN yourself matters.

Who gets the letter

- **The registered owner** whose name and address the maker can reasonably find in state records or other sources; failing that, the most recent purchaser it knows of (49 U.S.C. § 30119(d)).
- **By first-class mail** (49 CFR 577.7(a)).
- **Lessees:** a lessor that leases a vehicle for at least 4 months, and has leased at least 5 vehicles in the past 12 months, must pass the notice to the lessee (§ 30119(f)), by first-class mail within 10 days of receiving it.
- **The public**, if NHTSA decides public notice is needed for safety.

What the letter looks like



Envelope and letter headings required by 49 CFR 577.5; VIN shown as a placeholder.

Required contents of an owner letter

NHTSA's rule fixes the format. The envelope must say **SAFETY RECALL NOTICE** in capitals larger than the address, plus a label required by 49 CFR 577.14. The letter opens with **IMPORTANT SAFETY RECALL**, then "This notice applies to your vehicle" followed by your VIN, and a statement that it's sent under the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act. It must then describe the defect, the conditions that can trigger it, precautions to take until the repair, the risk (including whether a crash can occur without warning), the remedy, the earliest date it will be available, the estimated labor time and how to complain to NHTSA. Letters to addresses in Puerto Rico must be in English and Spanish (49 CFR 577.5).

Why used cars slip through

- State records can lag a sale, so the letter goes to the previous owner.
- A move to another state can leave the address stale.
- The first letter may arrive before parts exist; the second, when they do, is easy to miss.
- Private sales often skip the glovebox paperwork.
- If too few cars come in, NHTSA can order follow-up notices (49 CFR 577.10), but that takes time.
- Nobody is obliged to tell a private buyer.

DON'T WAIT FOR THE MAIL

Check for recalls on your car any time at **carcheckervin.com/recall-check**, and update your registration address promptly after you buy or move.

CHAPTER 11

MUST A DEALER FIX OPEN RECALLS BEFORE SELLING A USED CAR?

It depends on whether the car is new or used, who sells it and the state. Here is what federal law and one state's statute actually say.

Federal law: new cars and rental fleets, not used cars

Under 49 U.S.C. § 30120(i), once a manufacturer has notified a dealer about a recall on a **new** vehicle in the dealer's possession, the dealer may sell or lease it only after the defect is remedied. The same subsection covers rental companies with fleets of 35 or more vehicles. It allows dealers and rental companies to *offer* the vehicle; delivery is what has to wait. The subsection doesn't extend to used cars a dealer sells.

The FTC Buyers Guide on every dealer used car

Dealers that sold five or more used vehicles in the previous 12 months must post the FTC's Buyers Guide on the used cars they offer (16 CFR Part 455). Since the FTC's 2016 update, the guide tells shoppers to **"check for open safety recalls"** and points them to safercar.gov. The FTC considered banning such sales, or requiring disclosure, and chose neither, leaving that to legislators and NHTSA. It added that ads touting "rigorous inspections" can trigger a duty to disclose open recalls under the FTC Act, citing proposed settlements with General Motors, Jim Koons Management and Lithia Motors that required clear disclosures (81 FR 81664, Nov. 18, 2016).

Tennessee: report, disclose, and no sale with a do-not-drive recall

Tennessee's Motor Vehicle Recall and Disclosure Law (Tenn. Code Ann. § 55-29-101 et seq.) covers licensed dealers' retail sales of used vehicles of 10,000 lb GVWR or less. Under § 55-29-103:

- ☐ The dealer must obtain a VIN recall database report no more than **48 hours** old before the sale.
- ☐ If it shows a **do-not-drive recall or stop-sale order**, the dealer may not sell the car at retail until that repair is made.
- ☐ Any other open recall must be repaired, or disclosed by giving you the report before the sale.
- ☐ You sign a separate form headed **RECALL** in bold, at least 28-point type, not buried in the contract.
- ☐ Consumers can't waive these rules.
- ☐ Wholesale transfers between dealers, auctions and manufacturers are excluded.

Seller	Federal rule on open recalls	Notes
Dealer, new vehicle	Remedy before delivery (§ 30120(i))	Applies once the dealer has the maker's notice
Dealer, used vehicle	No remedy-before-sale rule in § 30120(i); Buyers Guide says check	States may add duties, as Tennessee does
Rental company (35+ fleet)	May not rent, sell or lease until remedied	Within 24 hours of the notice; 48 if it covers over 5,000 of its vehicles
Private seller	Not covered by § 30120(i) or the Buyers Guide	The check is up to you

Other states differ; check your own state's dealer law or attorney general.

CHAPTER 12

USED CAR RECALL CHECK: THE BUYER'S CHECKLIST

A **used car recall check** takes minutes and belongs in every purchase, alongside a vehicle history report and an independent inspection. Work through this list from the first ad to the first week of ownership.

Before you see the car

- [ ] Run the VIN, or the plate, at **carcheckervin.com/recall-check**.
- [ ] Note any Park It or Park Outside flag. A Park It car shouldn't be test-driven at all.
- [ ] Decode the VIN free at **carcheckervin.com/vin-decoder** to confirm the year, model and engine match the ad.
- [ ] Preview the history free at **carcheckervin.com/free-vin-check**.
- [ ] For each open recall, call a franchised dealer: is the remedy available, and are parts in stock?

At the viewing

- [ ] Read the VIN on the dashboard and door label; both must match the paperwork.
- [ ] Ask for recall repair orders and match their campaign numbers to the check.
- [ ] Look in the glovebox for recall letters.
- [ ] Check the dash for warning lights, including the airbag light.
- [ ] Ask the seller to complete open recalls before delivery.

Before you pay

- [ ] Re-run the recall check on the day of purchase.
- [ ] Buying from a Tennessee dealer? Expect a recall report no more than 48 hours old and a separate RECALL form for anything unrepaired.
- [ ] Buy the full history report ($14.99 at CarCheckerVIN) on the car you've chosen.
- [ ] Have an independent mechanic inspect it.
- [ ] Write any promised recall repair, and its date, into the contract.

After you buy

- [ ] Title and register the car promptly so future letters reach you.
- [ ] Book every open remedy with a franchised dealer and keep the repair orders.
- [ ] Open an owner account on the maker's site.
- [ ] Put a recurring reminder in your calendar to re-run the VIN.

Should an open recall change the price?

The repair is free, so an open recall isn't a cost to fix. What it can cost you is time: days without the car, a parts backorder, or a tow for a do-not-drive campaign. Those are fair to raise. A seller who says the work is done should be able to show the repair order.

ONE VIN, THREE CHECKS

Open recalls free at **carcheckervin.com/recall-check**, history preview free, and the full report for $14.99: title brands, NMVTIS title records, odometer readings, liens, insurance total-loss records, auction photos and open recalls in one place.

CHAPTER 13

CARFAX RECALL CHECK: WHAT CARFAX SHOWS & WHAT IT COSTS

Carfax handles recalls in three places. Here's what each does, and how the **Carfax recall check** compares with the free federal lookup and CarCheckerVIN.

CARFAX · PAID REPORT

Carfax Vehicle History Report

AAA's Carfax member page lists "Open Recalls" among the items a Carfax report checks, with accidents, owners, service history and mileage rollback. A single report is widely quoted at **$44.99**; many dealers include a free Carfax because the dealer pays. Its strength is service records.

CARFAX · FREE

Carfax free recall check

AAA promotes a free Carfax recall check for open safety recalls. Like NHTSA's lookup, it answers the recall question only.

CARFAX · FREE APP

CARFAX Car Care

The free app from CARFAX, Inc. tracks maintenance and, per its App Store listing, notifies you if a recall is issued on your vehicle. It's an owner's tool, not a way to vet a car you're buying. More at carcheckervin.com/carfax-car-care.

Carfax vs NHTSA vs CarCheckerVIN

	NHTSA	Carfax	CarCheckerVIN
Free open-recall check	✓	✓	✓
Recall search by license plate	✓	–	✓
Open recalls inside a paid history report	–	✓	✓
Single history report price	–	widely quoted $44.99	$14.99
Title brands and odometer records	–	✓	✓
Service records	–	strength	✓

Carfax features per AAA's Carfax page and the Car Care App Store listing, Nov 2026. A dash: not offered or not verified.

The honest bottom line

Recall data starts with the maker's filing and NHTSA publishes it free, so recalls alone are the weakest reason to buy any report. More on this at **carcheckervin.com/carfax-recall-check**, and on prices at **how much is a Carfax report**.

RECALL CHECK VS VEHICLE HISTORY REPORT

A recall check asks *is anything still waiting to be fixed?* A history report asks *what has happened to this vehicle?* Buyers need both; only one costs money.

	VIN recall check	Vehicle history report
Question answered	Are there unrepaired safety recalls?	What's on record for this VIN?
Main data source	Manufacturer filings published by NHTSA	State title records, NMVTIS, insurers, auctions, lenders, service shops
Title brands (salvage, flood, rebuilt, lemon buyback)	No	Yes
Odometer readings over time	No	Yes
Insurance total-loss records	No	Yes
Liens, impounds, auction sales	No	Yes (CarCheckerVIN: auctions with photos)
Open recalls	Yes	Many reports, including CarCheckerVIN's
Price	Free	$14.99 at CarCheckerVIN; Carfax widely quoted at $44.99

Where to buy a vehicle history report

CarCheckerVIN: $14.99

Check recalls and preview the history free, then unlock the full report: title brands and NMVTIS title records, odometer readings, owner count, liens and impounds, insurance total-loss records, auction sales with photos, service records, open recalls, specs and market value. Packs bring it to $9 a report.
carcheckervin.com/vehicle-history-report

Carfax: widely quoted at $44.99

Strongest on service records, and often free on dealer listings. The Carfax Buyback Guarantee pays when a report missed a DMV-issued title brand; it doesn't cover accidents, has deadlines and caps the payout. AAA Premier members get one free Carfax a year by phone; Classic and Plus get a discount that varies by club.

A buyer's sequence that saves money

1. **Run free recall checks** on every car; drop any with a Park It recall that can't be fixed before delivery.
2. **Preview the history free** to spot title brands and odometer issues early.
3. **Buy a $14.99 report** on the two or three that pass; a 3-pack is $35.99, less than one Carfax.
4. **Inspect the winner,** get open recalls done, and add a Carfax only if its service history matters to you.

CARFAX ALTERNATIVE

Comparing report providers? See **carcheckervin.com/alternatives-to-carfax**. Refer a friend to CarCheckerVIN and get a free report: **carcheckervin.com/refer**.

CHAPTER 14

RECALL MYTHS & AN OWNER'S ROUTINE

Most recall mistakes come from a handful of beliefs that sound reasonable and aren't true. Here they are, with what the law and NHTSA's records actually show.

Myth	Fact
"Only the original owner gets the free fix."	The free-remedy duty applies when the vehicle is presented, with no ownership condition (49 U.S.C. § 30120(a)).
"No letter means no recall."	Letters go to the owner in state records; after a sale or a move they often reach the wrong person.
"Dealers can't sell cars with open recalls."	True for new vehicles once the dealer is notified; the federal rule doesn't reach used cars. Some states, such as Tennessee, add disclosure rules.
"A completed recall can't come back."	Campaigns get superseded and remedy parts get recalled: Honda's 19V182 and Kia's 26V430 are examples.
"Software recalls always mean a dealer visit."	Many are fixed over the air, like Tesla's 22V844 taillight recall.
"Old recalls disappear after 15 years."	The NHTSA lookup stops showing them, but the free-remedy test is measured at the date of the notice. Ask the maker.
"You need Carfax to see recalls."	Open recalls are free by VIN at NHTSA and at carcheckervin.com/recall-check.
"If parts aren't available, there's nothing I can do."	Follow the letter's interim precautions. If the repair isn't done within a reasonable time after the earliest remedy date, complain to NHTSA; unreasonable delay obliges the maker to replace or refund (§ 30120(c)).

A five-minute routine for owners

1. **Check twice a year,** and whenever you buy, move or get a letter. It takes a minute at carcheckervin.com/recall-check.
2. **Keep your registration address current** so the maker can find you in state records.
3. **Open anything marked "SAFETY RECALL NOTICE."** Follow the interim advice even before parts arrive.
4. **Keep every recall repair order** with the car's papers; buyers will ask.
5. **Leasing?** A lessor covered by the federal rule must forward recall notices within 10 days, but checking the VIN yourself is faster.

Selling a car with an open recall

Get it fixed before you list it if you can: it's free, it removes an objection, and the repair order is a selling point. If parts aren't available, say so in the ad and hand over the owner letter. Dealers in some states face specific rules, like Tennessee's report and disclosure law, so a trade-in with an open recall may be handled differently there.

REFERENCE

VIN RECALL CHECK GLOSSARY

Buyers Guide
The FTC window form on dealers' used cars; it tells shoppers to check for open safety recalls.

Campaign number
NHTSA's identifier for a recall, such as 24V407; dealers use it to order parts and log the fix.

Completed recall
A recall whose remedy has been performed and recorded against that VIN.

Covered rental vehicle
A vehicle of 10,000 lb GVWR or less, rented for under 4 months, in a fleet of 35 or more.

Defect related to safety
A flaw in design, construction or performance creating unreasonable risk of a crash, death or injury, including when parked.

Do-not-drive recall
A recall whose notice tells owners to stop driving until repaired; flagged Park It.

Earliest remedy date
The first date parts and facilities can reasonably be expected to be ready, stated in the owner letter.

Engineering Analysis (EA)
A follow-on stage of an NHTSA defect investigation, such as EA15-001 on Takata inflators.

FMVSS
Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards: minimum performance rules for vehicles and equipment.

Inconsequential exemption
NHTSA relief from a recall when a defect or noncompliance doesn't affect safety.

Noncompliance
Failure of a vehicle or part to meet an applicable FMVSS.

NHTSA
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the U.S. agency that oversees recalls.

ODI
NHTSA's Office of Defects Investigation, which reviews complaints and investigates possible defects.

Open recall
A recall for which owner notice was sent and the remedy hasn't been done.

OTA recall
A recall remedied by an over-the-air software update.

Park It
NHTSA's flag for recalls where owners are told not to drive the vehicle.

Park Outside
NHTSA's flag for fire-risk recalls: park outdoors, away from structures.

Part 573 report
The maker's defect and noncompliance report to NHTSA, due within 5 working days.

Part 577 letter
The owner notification letter, headed IMPORTANT SAFETY RECALL.

Pre-notification remedy
A repair the owner paid for before the recall; reimbursable under the maker's plan.

Recall database report
In Tennessee law, a VIN-specific recall report a dealer must get before a used-car sale.

Stop-sale order
In Tennessee law, a maker's notice to its franchised dealers that certain used vehicles can't be sold at retail because of a recall.

Superseded recall
An earlier campaign folded into a newer one; the work may need doing again.

TSB
Technical service bulletin: repair guidance to dealers, not a recall.

VIN
Vehicle Identification Number: 17 characters, model year 1981 onward, no I, O or Q.

PUT IT TO WORK

Every term above shows up in real recall records. See them on your own car with a free check at **carcheckervin.com/recall-check**.

ANSWERS

VIN RECALL CHECK FAQ

How do I do a VIN recall check?

Enter the 17-character VIN at carcheckervin.com/recall-check or nhtsa.gov/recalls. Each open recall shows the component, risk and free remedy.

Is a recall check by VIN free?

Yes, at NHTSA, at CarCheckerVIN and through Carfax's free recall check. Only full history reports cost money.

How do I check for recalls on my car without the VIN?

Search by U.S. license plate and state. The search finds the VIN first; confirm it against the car before you buy.

Are recall repairs free?

Yes, at franchised dealers, for any owner. The law doesn't require it if the vehicle was first bought over 15 years before the recall notice.

What is a do not drive recall?

One whose notice tells you to stop driving until the repair is done. NHTSA flags it Park It. Call the dealer before moving the car.

What does Park Outside mean?

The defect can cause a fire even when the car is off. Park outdoors, away from buildings, until it's repaired.

How do I know if my car has a Takata airbag recall?

Run a VIN recall check. Repeat it even if an airbag was replaced before: some replacement inflators were recalled too.

Does the NHTSA recall lookup show every recall?

No. It skips recalls over 15 years old unless the maker offers more, some small and ultra-luxury makers, and very new recalls.

Why doesn't a new recall show yet?

It may not be loaded. Makers have up to 60 days after filing to mail letters; ask a franchised dealer.

What if parts aren't available?

Follow the letter's interim advice and ask the dealer to notify you. The 60-day repair clock starts after the earliest remedy date.

How long does a dealer have to fix a recall?

Failure to repair within 60 days of presentation is prima facie evidence of unreasonable delay, which obliges the maker to replace or refund.

Can I get money back for a repair I paid for?

Often. Makers must reimburse qualifying repairs done from at least a year before their recall filing; claims are answered within 60 days.

Can a dealer sell a used car with an open recall?

Federal law doesn't stop it; the new-vehicle rule doesn't cover used cars. Tennessee requires a report and disclosure and bans retail sale with a do-not-drive recall.

Does Carfax show recalls?

Yes. AAA lists open recalls among items a Carfax report checks, and Carfax offers a free recall check. You don't need a report, widely quoted at $44.99, just for recalls.

Does CarCheckerVIN's report list open recalls?

Yes, alongside title brands, odometer readings and auction records. The free check shows open recalls; the full report is $14.99.

Do recalls apply to leased and rental cars?

Yes. Covered lessors must forward notices within 10 days; rental fleets of 35+ must stop renting recalled cars within 24 hours (48 for very large notices).

How often should I check for recalls?

Twice a year, and whenever you buy, move or get a letter. New campaigns are filed all the time.

Is a used car recall check enough before buying?

No. Add a vehicle history report and an independent inspection; recall checks don't show title brands or mileage.

FREE VIN RECALL CHECK

Check any VIN for open recalls.

Open NHTSA safety recalls by VIN or license plate, free, with the campaign number and the free remedy. Full history report $14.99.

carcheckervin.com/recall-check →

Scan to check a VIN for recalls

Sources

- 49 U.S.C. §§ 30102, 30118, 30119, 30120, 30166 (law.cornell.edu)
- 49 CFR Parts 552, 573 (§§ 573.6, 573.13) and 577 (§§ 577.5, 577.7, 577.10) (ecfr.gov)
- 49 CFR Part 565, VIN requirements
- NHTSA recall lookup (nhtsa.gov/recalls)
- NHTSA recall records via api.nhtsa.gov: 14V700, 15V320, 15V370, 17V787, 18V022, 18V023, 19V182, 19V499, 21V081, 22V626, 22V844, 24V407, 26V430; read Nov 2026
- NHTSA ODI resume, investigation EA15-001 (static.nhtsa.gov)
- FTC Used Car Rule, 16 CFR Part 455; final rule 81 FR 81664, Nov. 18, 2016 (govinfo.gov)
- Tenn. Code Ann. §§ 55-29-102, 55-29-103
- Driver's Privacy Protection Act, 18 U.S.C. § 2721 et seq.
- AAA, CARFAX member benefits (discounts.aaa.com); CARFAX Car Care, Apple App Store
- Carfax price: independent pricing listings, 2026
- CarCheckerVIN prices: carcheckervin.com/pricing, Nov 2026

How we made this guide: written by CarCheckerVIN with AI assistance, from the public sources listed above; figures, prices and links checked November 2026.

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Vehicle history report

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