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***New Recall by Honda After Death in Malaysia Is Tied to Takata Airbag***

Video

**TRANSCRIPT**

0:08/1:10

**Takata’s Malfunctioning Airbags**

**In the course of reporting, The Times obtained video showing the potentially dangerous consequences of mishandling Takata’s airbags. Millions of vehicles with the airbags have been recalled worldwide.**

IN THE COURSE OF REPORTING THE STORY, WE OBTAINED VIDEO FROM A 2009 PRESENTATION ABOUT THE POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS CONSEQUENCES OF MISHANDLING TAKATA’S AIRBAGS. ONE CONCERN WAS THAT DAMAGE TO THE AIRBAG’S INFLATOR COULD CAUSE IT TO DEPLOY VIOLENTLY. WATCH AS WHAT IS THOUGHT TO BE A SIDE CURTAIN AIRBAG DEPLOYS, SENDING THE INFLATOR INTO THE CAR’S CABIN. THE INFLATOR DOESN’T RUPTURE IN THIS VIDEO, BUT SIMILAR VIOLENT DEPLOYMENTS HAVE BEEN LINKED TO AT LEAST FOUR DEATHS AND MORE THAN30 INJURIES. IN THOSE CASES, THE INFLATOR EXPLODED AND SHOT SHRAPNEL INTO THE CAR’S CABIN WHEN THE AIRBAG DEPLOYED. INTERNAL DOCUMENTS SUGGEST THERE WERE QUALITY CONTROL PROBLEMS AT THE EAGLE PASS, TEXAS DISTRIBUTION CENTER. YOU CAN SEE SENSITIVE AIRBAG MODULES BEING DROPPED ON THE FLOOR DURING TRANSIT. FORMER MANAGERS AT THE CENTER SAID SOME DROPPED AIRBAG MODULES WERE STILL SHIPPED TO AUTOMAKERS INSTEAD OF BEING RETURNED TO FACTORIES OR CHECKED FOR FAULTS. TWO MANAGERS SAID TAKATA’S PRODUCTION LINES WERE RESISTANT TO TAKING BACK SUCH UNITS BECAUSE THEY WERE STRUGGLING TO KEEP UP WITH DEMAND. NOW, 14 MILLION TAKATA AIRBAGS ARE NOW BEING RECALLED FROM 11 DIFFERENT AUTO MAKES WORLDWIDE. IN THOSE CASES, THE CANISTER EXPLODED INTO THE CABIN WHEN THE AIRBAG DEPLOYED. INTERNAL DOCUMENTS SUGGEST THERE WERE QUALITY CONTROL PROBLEMS AT THE EAGLE PASS, TEXAS DISTRIBUTION CENTER. YOU CAN SEE SENSITIVE AIRBAG MODULES BEING DROPPED ON THE FLOOR DURING TRANSIT. FORMER MANAGERS AT THE CENTER SAID SOME DROPPED AIRBAG MODULES WERE STILL SHIPPED TO AUTOMAKERS INSTEAD OF BEING RETURNED TO FACTORIES OR CHECKED FOR FAULTS. TWO MANAGERS SAID TAKATA’S PRODUCTION LINES WERE RESISTANT TO TAKING BACK SUCH UNITS BECAUSE THEY WERE STRUGGLING TO KEEP UP WITH DEMAND. NOW, 14 MILLION TAKATA AIRBAGS ARE NOW BEING RECALLED FROM 11 DIFFERENT AUTO MAKES WORLDWIDE.

**0:07**

**1:10**

**TAP TO UNMUTE**

In the course of reporting, The Times obtained video showing the potentially dangerous consequences of mishandling Takata’s airbags. Millions of vehicles with the airbags have been recalled worldwide.

**By**[**Hiroko Tabuchi**](http://www.nytimes.com/by/hiroko-tabuchi)

* Nov. 13, 2014

As scrutiny intensified from lawmakers and federal prosecutors over defective airbags made by the Takata Corporation, [Honda](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/business/companies/honda-motor-co-ltd/index.html?inline=nyt-org) confirmed on Thursday that a driver of one of its cars had died after a Takata airbag exploded. It was the fifth death linked to the defect.

The driver was pregnant when she was killed on July 27 in Malaysia, a Honda spokesman in Kuala Lumpur said on Friday. Her unborn baby also died.

“The driver crashed into another vehicle. The driver’s SRS airbag deployed abnormally, and the inflator case was broken,” Jordhat Johan, head of public relations at Honda Malaysia, said in a telephone interview. “The female driver died on the spot,” Mr. Jordhat added.

He said the car the woman was driving was registered in the sultanate of Brunei and was manufactured in Thailand.

The fatal accident — the first linked to a Takata airbag outside the United States — spurred a new round of recalls of about 170,000 Honda vehicles in Europe and Asia. Those airbags, Honda said, could contain the degraded propellant, or explosive, that is thought to have caused the woman’s airbag to deploy so violently.

The recalls underscored wider quality-control problems at Takata than previously known. The fatal rupture in July involved an airbag made at a now-shuttered Takata factory in Georgia, a plant that has not been cited to American regulators in the manufacturer’s shifting explanations of its airbag problems. The faulty airbags in previous recalls were made at two other Takata plants, in Washington State and Mexico, the company told regulators.

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The accident in Malaysia involved a 2003 Honda City, a subcompact made for the Asian and European markets, the Honda spokesman Tsutomu Nakamura said by phone. He said the airbag ruptured and sent metal debris into the driver.

[[](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/10/22/business/22takata-table-2-cols.html)](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/10/22/business/22takata-table-2-cols.html)

**[Takata Airbag Recalls: Affected Vehicles](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/10/22/business/22takata-table-2-cols.html)**

[This list of affected vehicles was compiled from information automakers provided to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/10/22/business/22takata-table-2-cols.html)

He also said that Honda’s Malaysia unit had alerted the automaker’s Tokyo headquarters to the death on Aug. 26, and that Honda had immediately asked Takata to investigate.

Legal pressure on Takata is growing. It has received a subpoena from a federal grand jury in the Southern District of New York, the company said in a regulatory filing on Thursday. The subpoena, for documents, is related to defects in Takata airbags, according to the filing with Japan’s Financial Services Agency.

The Senate Commerce Committee has scheduled a hearing on Takata’s airbag issue for next Thursday. A full list of witnesses was not released, but representatives from Takata, Toyota, Chrysler, Honda and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration are expected to appear, said Senator Richard Blumenthal, a Connecticut Democrat.

In a written statement, Takata’s chairman and chief executive, Shigehisa Takada, acknowledged that an examination of Takata-made airbag inflaters installed in the Honda cars recalled on Thursday had concluded that some were at risk of rupturing. He offered his condolences to the Malaysian driver’s family, but did not provide a more detailed explanation of the episode or the cause of her death.

“We are cooperating fully with the recall and devoting ourselves as a company to strengthening our quality control,” Mr. Takada said. “We will make every effort to regain trust.”

The latest recall — Honda’s 10th over the same defect — covers Europe and the Asia-Pacific region, including China and Japan, but it does not affect the United States, Mr. Nakamura said. That brings the total number of cars recalled over Takata’s airbags to 14.3 million worldwide, 6.2 million of which are Hondas.

Honda said its latest recall covered the 2002 model of the That’s microcar and 2003-8 models of the Fit Aria subcompact in Japan; the 2003-5 Fit Saloon in China; the 2003-5 City in the Asia-Pacific region; and the 2004-5 Fit and Jazz models and the 2004 Civic in Europe.

Ten other automakers, including Toyota, Nissan, BMW and Chrysler, have also recalled cars over the defect.



Image



A Tokyo billboard for Takata Corporation. Takata airbag defects have been linked to five deaths.Credit...Toru Hanai/Reuters

Takata has said problems with the propellant, or explosives, in the airbags’ inflaters can cause the inflaters to explode, spraying shrapnel into the car’s cabin and injuring the driver or passenger.

Both Honda and Takata have offered a string of reasons for the problems in its propellant, which generates the gases needed to inflate the airbag. They have so far included issues with a machine that presses the propellant into tablets at a Takata factory in Moses Lake, Wash., and damaging exposure to moisture at another plant, in Monclova, Mexico.

But Honda said that the propellant behind July’s airbag rupture case came from a Takata factory in LaGrange, Ga., which Takata shuttered in 2005 as part of its shift in manufacturing facilities to Mexico. The supplier had set up the factory in 1989 as a joint venture between Takata and the German manufacturer Temic.

Mr. Nakamura said the conveyor on a machine that manufactures the propellant tablets had malfunctioned, leaving them on the belt and exposing them to moisture. He said the manufacturing problem, which lasted from November 2001 to November 2003, only affected inflaters for airbags shipped to Europe and the Asia-Pacific region.

Takata and Honda have followed similar patterns of disclosure, admitting more manufacturing glitches as reported deaths or injuries grew, then expanding recalls.

News of the fifth death came after Takata [offered a rebuttal](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/13/business/takata-offers-its-rebuttal-to-report-of-secret-airbag-tests.html) Wednesday to accusations by two former employees that it carried out tests on airbags in 2004 in Michigan and found signs of defects, but [did not report the results to federal regulators](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/13/business/takata-offers-its-rebuttal-to-report-of-secret-airbag-tests.html).

The manufacturer said the assertions, reported by The New York Times on Nov. 6, “confuse multiple events” and tell “a story that is simply untrue.”

In Japan, Mr. Takada, the Takata chairman, has stayed out of the public eye during the crisis. A business briefing for industry analysts held in Tokyo on Thursday was attended by lower-ranking executives, and led by Takata’s executive vice president for accounting, Yoichiro Nomura, the company said.

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***Takata Offers Its Rebuttal to Report of Secret Airbag Tests***





A billboard for the Takata Corporation in Tokyo.Credit...Toru Hanai/Reuters

**By**[**Hiroko Tabuchi**](http://www.nytimes.com/by/hiroko-tabuchi)

* Nov. 12, 2014

The airbag maker Takata issued a statement Wednesday night offering a “substantive rebuttal” to accusations by two former employees that the company [carried out tests](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/07/business/airbag-maker-takata-is-said-to-have-conducted-secret-tests.html) on airbags in 2004 in Michigan and found signs of defects but did not report the results to federal regulators.

The Japanese manufacturer said the claims, reported by The New York Times on Nov. 6, confuse “multiple events occurring at different times and for different purposes and thereby tells a story that is simply untrue.”

The statement says that Takata’s engineers in the United States did not learn of the first episode involving an airbag with the defect — which can cause an airbag inflater to rupture when it deploys in an accident, sending metal fragments into the car’s cabin — until “the middle of 2005.” The event involved the crash of a Honda Accord in Alabama in May 2004, injuring the car’s driver.

The Takata statement said, “So they did not and could not perform inflater tests in 2004 in response to that accident.”

The two former employees of the Takata testing lab in Michigan said the tests were conducted in secret in summer 2004. The employees, who said they took part in the testing, said that the tested airbags were retrieved from scrapyards, and that two of 50 tested airbag inflaters cracked during the tests, a condition that can lead to rupture.

The Takata statement not only contradicted the account by the two former employees, but also Honda’s account of the 2004 accident.

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When asked in August about the Alabama accident, Honda said in a statement that it had “immediately shared all available information with the airbag supplier and reported the incident” to safety regulators “in the second quarter of 2004.”

A Honda spokesman in Tokyo referred questions Wednesday night to the automaker’s spokesman in the United States, who had no immediate comment.

In a phone interview Wednesday night, one of the Takata employees, who was a senior member of the testing lab, strongly challenged the version of events presented in the Takata statement.

[[](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/10/22/business/22takata-table-2-cols.html)](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/10/22/business/22takata-table-2-cols.html)

**[Takata Airbag Recalls: Affected Vehicles](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/10/22/business/22takata-table-2-cols.html)**

[This list of affected vehicles was compiled from information automakers provided to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/10/22/business/22takata-table-2-cols.html)

“What Takata says is not true,” said the former employee, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of continuing ties to the company. “They are trying to switch things around.”

More than 14 million vehicles from 11 automakers worldwide have been recalled since 2008 because of the rupture defect, which has been linked to four deaths in the United States. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration recently reopened a Takata inquiry that was closed in 2010, and several lawmakers in Washington have called for further investigations, and congressional hearings, into the manufacturer’s handling of the airbag defect.

Takata has also received a subpoena from a federal grand jury in the Southern District of New York, the company said in a regulatory filing on Thursday. The subpoena for documents is related to defects in the company’s airbags, according to the filing with Japan’s Financial Services Agency.

Takata, one of the world’s largest suppliers of airbags, did not respond to requests from The Times for comment about the employees’ accusations ahead of the Nov. 6 article. On Friday, after the article was published, it issued a statement describing the accusations as “fundamentally inaccurate,” but offered no details.

The statement Wednesday night offered comment on several points raised in the article, which the statement described as having “unfairly impugned the integrity of Takata and its employees.”

The statement said that the company conducted tests on airbags in summer 2004 at its Auburn Hills, Mich., facility, but that the tests did not involve airbags retrieved from scrapyards, were not conducted in secret and did not involve the rupturing problem.

“They were done at the request of N.H.T.S.A. to address a cushion-tearing issue unrelated to inflater rupturing,” the statement said.

The company also said it had conducted tests involving airbags retrieved from scrapyards for the rupturing risk — but not until 2007. Those results, it said, were reported to both Honda and N.H.T.S.A. “Takata did not suppress any test results showing cracking or rupturing in the inflaters,” the statement said.

The statement also took issue with statements by the two former employees that in 2004 engineers for Takata had begun experimenting with prototypes for possible fixes to the rupture problem but that the efforts were halted and the results of the tests and experiments were destroyed or discarded.

The statement said the effort to find “alternative inflater designs” occurred in 2007, not 2004, and were unsuccessful. “None of the new design ideas worked and several resulted in broken inflaters,” the statement said. “Eventually, the engineers shut down these prototype experiments and the materials were discarded, as is common practice.”

The former employee contacted Wednesday night said Takata’s statement had confused the events.

“We tested inflaters in 2004 from junk cars, scrapyards, for rapidly disassembling inflaters, not a cushion-tearing problem,” the former employee said. “There were two bags where the inflater showed signs of fracture.”

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# *A Cheaper Airbag, and Takata’s Road to a Deadly Crisis*





Linda Rink holding a Takata airbag inflater. At least 14 people have been killed by the faulty devices.Credit...Rajah Bose for The New York Times

**By**[**Hiroko Tabuchi**](http://www.nytimes.com/by/hiroko-tabuchi)

* Aug. 26, 2016

In the late 1990s, General Motors got an unexpected and enticing offer. A little-known Japanese supplier, Takata, had designed a much cheaper automotive airbag.

G.M. turned to its airbag supplier — the Swedish-American company [Autoliv](https://www.autoliv.com/) — and asked it to match the cheaper design or risk losing the automaker’s business, according to Linda Rink, who was a senior scientist at Autoliv assigned to the G.M. account at the time.

But when Autoliv’s scientists studied the Takata airbag, they found that it relied on a dangerously volatile compound in its inflater, a critical part that causes the airbag to expand.

“We just said, ‘No, we can’t do it. We’re not going to use it,’” said Robert Taylor, Autoliv’s head chemist until 2010.

Today, that compound is at the heart of the largest automotive safety recall in history. [At least 14 people have been killed](http://mobile.nytimes.com/2016/06/28/business/takata-airbag-linked-to-another-death-in-malaysia.html) and more than 100 have been injured by faulty inflaters made by Takata. More than 100 million of its airbags have been installed in cars in the United States by General Motors and 16 other automakers.

Details of G.M.’s decision-making process almost 20 years ago, which has not been reported previously, suggest that a quest for savings of just a few dollars per airbag compromised a critical safety device, resulting in passenger deaths. The findings also indicate that automakers played a far more active role in the prelude to the crisis: Rather than being the victims of Takata’s missteps, automakers pressed their suppliers to put cost before all else.

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“General Motors told us they were going to buy Takata’s inflaters unless we could make a cheaper one,” Ms. Rink said. Her team was told that the Takata inflaters were as much as 30 percent cheaper per module, she added, a potential savings of several dollars per airbag. “That set off a big panic on how to compete.”



Image

Linda Rink was a senior scientist in the late 1990s at the Swedish company Autoliv, which supplied airbags to General Motors at the time. “General Motors told us they were going to buy Takata’s inflaters unless we could make a cheaper one,” Ms. Rink said. “That set off a big panic on how to compete.”Credit...Rajah Bose for The New York Times

Tom Wilkinson, a spokesman for General Motors, which was reorganized as a new company after declaring bankruptcy in 2009, said the Takata discussions “occurred two decades ago between old G.M. and a supplier,” and therefore it was “not appropriate for us to comment.”

“We knew that G.M. was getting low-cost inflaters from others,” said Chris Hock, a former member of Mr. Taylor’s team who left Autoliv in April. “That was a dangerous path.”

Even with the record recall, deadly accidents and research critical of ammonium nitrate, Takata continues to manufacture airbags with the compound — and automakers continue to buy them. The airbags appear in the 2016 models of seven automakers, and they are also being installed in cars as replacement airbags for those being recalled.

Takata said in a statement that it had taken steps to protect the ammonium nitrate it uses against temperature changes, which along with moisture are the main factors contributing to its volatility. The manufacturer said it was also studying, along with safety regulators and some automakers, inflaters with a drying agent “to better understand and quantify their service life.”

## ‘It Turned It Into Shrapnel’

The new airbag came not a moment too soon for Takata.

The Japanese supplier had been making seatbelts in the United States since the mid-1980s, but its airbag business, which it began in earnest in the 1990s, was in trouble.

A previous generation of airbags supplied to Nissan had the problem of deploying too forcefully. Those airbags were linked to at least 40 eye injuries in the 1990s.

Takata began experimenting with alternative propellants. But in 1997 its inflater plant in Moses Lake, Wash., was rocked by a series of explosions that destroyed equipment and greatly curtailed production, according to insurance claims made by the company at the time.

After the blast, Takata was forced to buy inflaters from competitors and airlift them to automakers across the country. The company’s American business struggled “to maintain corporate viability,” Takata said in a lawsuit filed against its insurer.

It was against that difficult backdrop that Takata embraced the cheaper new compound, ammonium nitrate, in its airbag inflaters, according to former employees. Mark Lillie, who had worked as an engineer at Takata, [told The New York Times in 2014](https://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/20/business/takatas-switch-to-cheaper-airbag-propellant-is-at-center-of-crisis.html) that considerations over cost spurred the supplier to use the compound, despite the dangers associated with it. Mr. Lillie raised concerns over the risks in the late 1990s, but his warnings went unheeded.

Around the same time, the team at Autoliv was asked to study the Takata design. Mr. Taylor, the head Autoliv chemist, said his team immediately recognized the risks posed by the ammonium nitrate.

“We tore the Takata airbags apart, analyzed all the fuel, identified all the ingredients,” he said. The takeaway, he said, was that when the airbag was detonated, “the gas is generated so fast, it blows the inflater to bits.”

Mr. Hock, the former member of Mr. Taylor’s team, said he recalled carrying out testing on a mock ammonium nitrate inflater that produced explosive results that left his team shaken. “When we lit it off, it totally destroyed the fixture,” he said. “It turned it into shrapnel.”

The former Autoliv scientists said that they considered their verdict against the ammonium nitrate irrefutable, so much so that they understood Autoliv had alerted other automakers to the danger.

An Autoliv spokesman declined to comment on the company’s dealings with its automotive customers, which at the time also included Chrysler, Ford, Honda, Mazda, Mitsubishi and Toyota. Though Autoliv continued to supply those companies, several started using Takata’s new airbags in the early to mid-2000s.

Fiat Chrysler declined to comment, while Honda, Mitsubishi and Toyota said that they had not located any pertinent information from that period.

“There was no industry understanding in the late 1990s” that ammonium nitrate propellants, or explosives, were risky, Matt Sloustcher, a Honda spokesman, said in an emailed statement.

Autoliv’s concerns were backed by well-known research. Widely available studies going back decades warned of the tricky properties of ammonium nitrate, which can break down when exposed to moisture or temperature changes — vital factors, federal regulators said, with the defective Takata airbags.

“Some of the worst industrial accidents at the worldwide level involve ammonium nitrate,” Luigi T. De Luca, an Italian academic and a leading expert in solid propellant rockets, said in an email.

In a 2003 presentation, a propellant expert at TRW, which also made airbags with ammonium nitrate for several years in the early 2000s, outlined what he called “well-known issues” with using the compound, warning of “conditions that stimulate an explosive response.” The expert, Harold R. Blomquist, said that explosive response could be triggered by moisture and by temperature swings.

To make the inflaters safe, TRW had adopted several practices, according to Mr. Blomquist’s presentation and a spokesman at TRW. It freeze-dried its ammonium nitrate to protect it from moisture during the manufacturing process. It fitted its inflaters with a pressure release valve to prevent ammonium nitrate from overpressurizing. And it used advanced welding to keep the inflaters airtight.

Those safeguards, however, were not cost-effective, and the company phased out its use of ammonium nitrate in 2006. (Both Autoliv and TRW now use a propellant based on guanidine nitrate, a compound that is less sensitive to moisture and temperature swings.)

The dangers associated with ammonium nitrate made it difficult at times for Takata to find a supplier. An internal memo prepared in March 2000 by the Mississippi Chemical Corporation, an agricultural fertilizer supplier, states that early talks to supply Takata with ammonium nitrate fell apart over liability issues. A handwritten note on the memo notes: “Send letter informing them about explosion hazard.”

## Self-Regulation Gone Wrong

Airbag design and performance specifications are set by a consortium of automakers, with little involvement by safety regulators. In congressional testimony, Takata has insisted that specifications set by the automakers did not anticipate the problems caused by exposure to heat and humidity over many years.

But a review of the consortium’s design and performance specifications by The Times shows the automotive industry had raised concerns about the risks of ammonium nitrate more than a decade ago.

[A 2004 update](http://standards.sae.org/uscar24/) to its specifications singled out ammonium nitrate inflaters and required them to “undergo added stability evaluation.”

The specifications from the consortium, known as the [United States Council on Automotive Research](http://www.uscar.org/guest/index.php), show a clear understanding of the damaging effects of moisture and temperature on airbag explosives. Inflaters must be evaluated for their “resistance to temperature aging in an environment of high humidity,” the specifications said.

The problem, it appears, is that no one enforced the specifications.

The update in the specifications was issued four years before Honda, the automaker most affected by the defective airbags, started issuing recalls in 2008. It was not until 2013 that other automakers started recalling cars with the airbags. Today, 64 million of the defective airbags have been subject to the recall.

[[](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/business/takata-airbag-recall-guide.html)](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/business/takata-airbag-recall-guide.html)

## [The Airbag in Your Car Could Explode. This Is What You Should Do About It.](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/business/takata-airbag-recall-guide.html)

[Defective airbags made by Takata have been tied to 12 deaths and more than 180 injuries in the United States alone. The ensuing recall — the largest in automotive history — has turned out to be messy, confusing and frustrating for car owners.](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/business/takata-airbag-recall-guide.html)

The lack of enforcement of the specifications points to the self-regulatory nature of automotive manufacturing.

Joan Claybrook, a former administrator at the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, said that while the safety agency should have been more engaged, the system places a heavy onus on automakers to make sure that suppliers comply with basic safety standards.

“Automakers play a big role,” she said. “They’re expected to be involved with their suppliers in a very detailed way.”

A former Takata engineer who spoke to The Times and who was recently deposed by Honda in litigation with Takata revealed how easily the supplier avoided detection in getting the defective airbags to market.

Workers at a now-closed Takata plant in La Grange, Ga., manipulated tests meant to measure whether inflaters were airtight, said the former engineer, who still works in the automotive industry and spoke on the condition of anonymity. His testimony in the lawsuit has not yet been made public.

The tests involved inserting a small amount of helium gas into the inflaters. The inflaters were then put in a vacuum. If too much helium was detected outside the inflater, that meant the inflater had a leak, was defective and should be scrapped.

But workers at the La Grange factory would take the defective inflaters and test them repeatedly, to deplete the helium. With no helium left inside, the inflaters would pass the test, according to the engineer. The workers would then give the defective inflaters new bar code identifiers, so the repeated testing could not be tracked.

The engineer said he questioned his Takata bosses in 2001 about manipulating the tests, but was told “not to come back to any more meetings.” He left the company later that year.

Honda said that it became aware of the manipulated tests only when the engineer was deposed by its lawyers.

“Honda expects its suppliers to act with integrity at all times and is deeply troubled by this behavior by one of our suppliers,” the automaker said in a statement.

Susan Bairley, a spokeswoman for the consortium led by General Motors, Ford and Chrysler, said it did not keep records “of discussions leading to research results,” so it could not comment on concerns that might have resulted from the 2004 update to its airbag specifications. G.M. and Ford referred questions back to the consortium; Fiat Chrysler declined to comment.

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