

GM has known about steering problems since 2011

WASHINGTON, USA: - Documents revealed this week show that General Motors' Chief Executive Mary Barra was told of steering problems on cars in 2011. The steering problem and an ignition switch problem has led to the company's recall of 2.6m cars worldwide.



Mary Barra, Chief Executive of GM was apparently informed about steering problems affecting GM cars in 2011. Image: LinkedIn

US lawmakers published an internal email, dated 3 October 2011, from a GM engineer to Barra, who was at that time head of product development GM.

The email includes a New York Times article of the same date about the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) investigation of steering problems with the Saturn Ion, the Chevrolet Cobalt and the Pontiac GS that led to 13 deaths in the US.

The newspaper said the NHTSA should have included the Ion in GM's 2010 recall of certain vehicles with steering problems.

"During the initial Cobalt case, the Ion data did not justify being included. This situation has been evolving," said Engineer Terry Woychowski in the email.

The document did not show whether Barra, who became GM's chief executive in January, had responded.

More than two years later, on 31 March, GM recalled 1.5m cars worldwide for a steering problem, including the 2004 to 2007 models of the Ion and the 2010 Cobalt.

2.6m vehicles recalled

The same Cobalt and Ion cars are among the 2.6m cars GM recalled in February and March this year for an ignition switch problem that can prevent airbags from deploying.

GM, the largest car manufacturer in the US, was aware of the ignition switch problem more than a decade before the recall.

The email was among a trove of documents released by the House of Representatives's Energy and Commerce Committee. The House and the Senate are investigating why GM took so long to recall the cars with defective ignition switches.

The note refers to a Saturn Ion steering problem, an issue completely separate from the ignition-related problems," GM spokesman Alan Adler said in a statement.

"The email in no way contradicts Barra's previous statements or testimony before the House or Senate subcommittees," Adler added.

In her testimony before Congress on 1 and 2 April, Barra said that she was not aware of the ignition switch problem until December. Lawmakers did not ask her if she knew about other defects in different GM models.

Source: AFP via I-Net Bridge

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