

# CENTER FOR AUTO SAFETY

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January 8, 2015

Sergio Marchionne, Chairman  
Chrysler Group LLC  
1000 Chrysler Drive  
Auburn Hills, MI 48321-8004

Dear Mr. Marchionne:

While Chrysler has many safety issues, none can compare to fuel system fires in Jeep Cherokee, Grand Cherokee, and Liberty vehicles. The death and injury toll due to these fires remains unmatched by any current defect across all manufacturers, *even those related to the faulty GM ignition switches and Takata exploding airbag inflators*. Just in 2013 and 2014, these Jeeps had 20 more fatal fire crashes with 29 deaths, at least 10 of which are deaths due to fire. (Attachment A.)

CAS first brought this matter to the attention of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (“NHTSA”) almost five years ago. Even after three protracted NHTSA investigations and one inadequate recall, Chrysler has yet to break its pattern of denial and delay, while owners of these Jeeps continue to die and suffer severe injuries as a result.

Over a year and a half have passed since Chrysler agreed on June 18, 2013 to perform a limited recall (13V-252) of a select portion of Jeeps prone to being consumed by post-collision fires due to a defective fuel tank system. The recall remedy is a trailer hitch, of which former Chrysler Vice President for Engineering Francois Castaing testified under oath: “The tow package [which includes the trailer hitch] does not protect the [fuel] tank.”

Chrysler never wanted to do any Jeep fuel tank recall. In fact you negotiated a deal to limit the recall to the 1993-98 Grand Cherokee and 2002-07 Liberty during a meeting in Chicago O’Hare airport with former Transportation Secretary Raymond LaHood and NHTSA Administrator David Strickland, who left NHTSA to work for a law firm that represents Chrysler.

Furthermore, Chrysler stretched the schedule for the recall to the point it would have taken 4.7 years to complete.<sup>1</sup> Every day that goes by another recalled Jeep goes off the road, further reducing the cost of the limited recall to Chrysler. Now Chrysler is refusing to even put the trailer hitch on many vehicles with frame rust unless the consumer pays to repair the frame first knowing the up to \$4,000 cost will take more vehicles out of the recall.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [Special Order Directed to Chrysler, LLC, from O. Kevin Vincent, NHTSA Chief Counsel, P. 3-4, July 2, 2014.](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Chrysler TSB “Safety Recall N46/NHTSA 13V252, Rear Structural Reinforcement, August 2014.](#)

While Chrysler continue to drag out and limit the recall, crashes, deaths and injuries continue to mount:

- On November 10, 2013, Skyler Anderson-Coughlin was killed in Longmeadow, MA, when his 1996 Jeep Grand Cherokee was struck from behind and erupted into flames.
- On November 18, 2014, Kayla White burned to death in her 2003 Jeep Liberty on the Lodge Freeway in Ferndale after being rear-ended by a sloping profile Cadillac CTS. Tragically, both Kayla and her unborn child died in the ensuing fire.
- On March 11, 2014, Joseph and Esther DiGiovanni died when their 2004 Jeep Liberty was struck from behind by a pickup truck in Maryland. The impact ruptured the Jeep's fuel tank, causing a fire and explosion that consumed the DiGiovanni vehicle.
- On April 5, 2014, Magdaleno and Raymundo Sanchez of were traveling in their 1994 Jeep Grand Cherokee in Los Angeles, CA, when it was struck from behind, resulting in severe burn injuries to both.

These are but some of the terrible stories of 395 fatal fire crashes of [1993-2004 Jeep Grand Cherokees](#), [1993-2001 Jeep Cherokees](#) and [2002-2007 Jeep Libertys](#) that have resulted in 545 deaths, at least 187 of which are deaths due to fire. There has not been a single confirmed fire death since Chrysler moved the fuel tanks from behind the rear axle in 2005 for the Grand Cherokee and 2008 for the Liberty.

How many more people must die a horrible death as did 23-year old pregnant Kayla White in Chrysler's own backyard on November 18, 2014 before Chrysler finally does the right thing and recalls all the Jeeps investigated by NHTSA in EA12-005 with a repair remedy that will withstand an FMVSS 301 50-mph offset rear impact? Ford did it for the Pinto, Chrysler can do it for the Jeep.<sup>3</sup>

Sincerely,



Clarence Ditlow  
Executive Director

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<sup>3</sup> When Ford recalled the Pinto, the remedy withstood the more stringent FMVSS 301 in place in 1978, not the old standard in place when the Pinto was made. The comparable remedy for the Jeep is the more stringent FMVSS in place in 2008, not the standard in place when the Jeeps were made.