

Recalls and Complaints About Automobile Defects Spike in 2010

On behalf of Johnston, Moore & Thompson

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This year saw many high profile problems with automobile safety with Toyota's recall of 7.1 million vehicles leading the way. Due to the [sudden acceleration problems](#) in its vehicles, Toyota garnered most of the headlines related to automobile safety. However, Toyota's recalls only accounted for about one third of the vehicles recalled in 2010.

General Motors recalled about 4 million vehicles and Honda and Nissan each recalled more than 2 million vehicles. In total, automakers recalled about 20 million vehicles this year, the largest amount since the auto industry set a record of 30.8 million recalled vehicles in 2004.

Although 2010 may not have set a record for recalls, driver complaints to the National Highway Safety Administration increased. The NHTSA handled more than 64,000 complaints in 2010, compared with an average of about 35,000 in the past few years. One key measurement of auto safety complaints is the amount of complaints the NHTSA receives per every 100,000 vehicles sold. The industry average for 2010 was 47 complaints for every 100,000 vehicles sold, up from 30 in 2009.

Toyota had the worst complaint ratio in 2010. The ratio of complaints for Toyota was 37 for every 100,000 vehicles in 2009, but that ratio increased to 87 for 2010. Nissan had the second highest ratio in 2010, with about 62 complaints per 100,000 vehicles sold. Volkswagen had the third worst ratio at about 58. Ford and Honda had the lowest ratios among large automakers.

The NHTSA reviews every complaint it receives about [automobile safety](#). After it reviews complaints, it determines if a detailed investigation is needed and if a recall is required.

Sources:

Associated Press, "Auto industry recalled 20 million vehicles in 2010," 12/29/2010

Chicago Tribune, "[Complaints about auto defects increased sharply this year](#)," Jerry Hirsch, 12/29/2010