

## **NHTSA Makes Its First Ever Whistleblower Award**

Over \$24M to whistleblower who provided key information on Hyundai/Kia safety concerns

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The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration today announced it is making its first ever whistleblower award. NHTSA will give more than \$24 million to a whistleblower in connection with information provided to NHTSA related to Hyundai Motor America (Hyundai) and Kia Motors America (Kia). This award is the maximum percentage allowed by law of the \$81 million in cash collected by the United States and is the first award NHTSA has issued under its authority.

The whistleblower provided NHTSA with information related to Hyundai and Kia's violations of the Safety Act. In November 2020, NHTSA issued Consent Orders with Hyundai and Kia reflecting the agency's assessment that both Hyundai and Kia conducted untimely recalls of over 1.6 million vehicles equipped with Theta II engines and inaccurately reported crucial information to NHTSA about the nature of serious defects in the engines. The combined penalties in the Consent Orders amounted to \$210 million, \$81 million of which was paid in cash to the United States government. By statute, NHTSA may award a maximum of 30% of collected monies to a whistleblower found to contribute significant information to an action that results in penalties of more than one million dollars.

"Whistleblowers play a crucial role in bringing information to NHTSA about serious safety problems that are hidden from the agency," said Dr. Steven Cliff, NHTSA's Deputy Administrator. "This information is critical to public safety and we are committed to rewarding those who bring information to us."

Whistleblowers are protected by law. While NHTSA is in the process of drafting regulations for its whistleblower program, whistleblowers may receive awards without a final rule. Potential whistleblowers can already provide information to the agency by contacting [NHTSAWhistleblower@dot.gov](mailto:NHTSAWhistleblower@dot.gov) or through the agency's hotline at [888-327-4236](tel:888-327-4236).

Earlier this year, the Agency launched a [webpage](#) to assist whistleblowers in determining what information they should provide and how they should go about doing so. NHTSA took this action to make this program easier to access in a recognition of the important role whistleblowers can play in enhancing the safety of the nation's roadways.

NHTSA welcomes information from whistleblowers on a wide variety of topics, including potential vehicle safety defects, noncompliance with the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards, and violations of the Vehicle Safety Act. That information can lead to formal actions including investigations, recalls, or a civil penalty enforcement action.

Contact:

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