

NEWS BLAST



Airbag Recall

Have You Checked If Your Car Is Subject to Recall?

By now you must have heard about the recalls of defective airbags made by Japan's Takata Corp. that were installed in millions of vehicles worldwide.

The recalls started in 2014 after it was discovered that some Takata inflators can explode with excessive force and spray metal shrapnel into passenger compartments. They are suspected in 13 deaths worldwide and more than 100 injuries.

The defective airbags have been installed in vehicles that were made as long ago as 2001 and virtually every major brand – American, Japanese and European ones – has used Takata airbags in at least some of their vehicles.

To date 70 million vehicles have been recalled – 24 million in the U.S. – and Takata announced in May that it would declare as defective another 35 million to 40 million airbag inflators in the U.S.

To make matters worse, automakers are now selling vehicles with defective airbag inflators, knowing that they will have to recall them later. That's because they are waiting for replacement parts from Takata.

If you've bought a new car in the last three or four years, there is a strong likelihood that it came installed with an airbag manufactured by Takata. If so, you likely would have received a letter from the carmaker informing you that you need to go in and have the airbags swapped out.

The worst thing you can do is ignore this letter, as it will cost you nothing to fix the airbags except time.

And if you haven't received a letter and have a vehicle that was made since 2001, you should check to see if your car is on the recall list. If you don't, you could be putting your life and those of your family in danger if you have an accident.

If you're unsure, you can check on the following website to see whether your vehicle model has been the subject of any recalls, including for the Takata airbags:

vinrcl.safercar.gov/vin/ ❖

Airbag Ruptures

In June of 2015, Takata stated that it was aware of 88 ruptures in total:

- 67 on the driver's side
- 21 on the passenger's side

These were out of what it calculated was just over 1.2 million airbag deployments spread over 15 years.

Despite these figures, airbags in general are not a danger.

The Department of Transportation estimates that between 1987 and 2012, frontal airbags have saved 37,000 lives.

CONTACT US >>>



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Summertime Safety

Keeping Guests, Family Safe in Your Backyard This Summer

SUMMERTIME IS right around the corner and that means many Americans will be entertaining family and friends in their backyards.

Fire pits are helping homeowners extend the backyard season, and many of today's backyard playsets are more elaborate than a simple set of swings and a slide.

Whether backyard entertaining means spending time by the swimming pool or gathered around the grill, you will want to ensure that your guests and family are not at risk of getting hurt.

In this article we look at the most common backyard hazards and what you can do to protect everyone who comes over.

TRAMPOLINES

Trampolines can be fun for kids, but according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, they are the cause of nearly 100,000 injuries each year. To play it safe:

- Allow one jumper at a time.
- Supervise children at all times.
- Remove trampoline ladders after use to prevent unsupervised access by young children.
- Consider a trampoline enclosure to prevent injuries from falls.
- Anchor the trampoline and enclosure to the ground with an anchor kit.



FIRE PITS

Warm nights are the perfect time to roast marshmallows, but inadequate supervision or improper use of fire pits can cause injury. You should:

- Place the fire pit in an area away from your home, backyard deck or low-hanging tree branches.
- Always have an adult watching the fire pit while it is in use and until it has cooled off.
- Never leave the fire unattended.
- Use sand to fully extinguish the fire.
- Let the coals cool completely and dispose of them in a metal container.



PLAYSETS

Damaged or weather-worn playsets can cause accidents. Stay safe by:

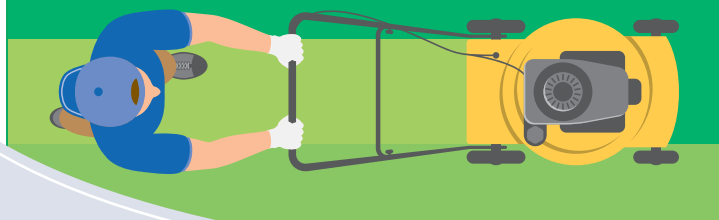
- Supervising children.
- Inspecting the set regularly checking for sturdiness, rusty bolts and wood rot, and making necessary repairs.
- Inspecting playsets for openings between pieces that could trap a child's head or neck.
- Placing playsets securely on level ground and on wood chips or other soft materials to cushion falls and help prevent injuries.



LAWN MOWERS

Lawn mowers can easily cause injury. Follow these tips for safety:

- Read the mower's manual, heed safety and operating instructions and learn the controls.
- Do not allow children to ride as passengers on a riding lawn mower, and keep them a safe distance away or out of the yard completely while mowing.
- Clean up toys and other objects, such as rocks, from the yard to help prevent injuries to you, your loved ones and pets due to flying objects.
- Don't leave a running mower unattended.
- Never unclog or work on a lawn mower while the engine is on or when the spark plug is connected.
- Don't wear open-toed shoes when operating the mower.
- Do wear eye protection, and preferably long pants, while mowing your lawn.



GARDEN WATER FEATURES

Fish ponds, waterfalls and other water features, while beautiful, can pose a drowning danger. Make sure:

- That an adult watches children at all times when in or near water.
- To install a lockable fence around the water feature.
- To tightly cover water treatment or chemical mixtures after use. ❖



Cyber Security

Protecting Your Connected Car against Hacking



IMAGINE THAT you're cruising along a busy highway and suddenly find your taken over by an outside force. First it's just the radio, the wipers and the air conditioning behaving chaotically. Then, as you are coming up on a corner at high speed, the transmission shuts down.

While this sounds like the start of an alien abduction, unfortunately this actually happened to the *Wired* journalist Andy Greenberg recently when he agreed to let two hackers set upon the Internet-connected Jeep he was driving.

The hackers, Charlie Miller and Chris Valasek, have been conducting government-funded research into the security of smart auto systems to show just how vulnerable our cars become to hacking as more vehicles are connected to the Net.

They were able to take control of the Jeep from 10 miles away. Nearly half a million cars on the road today are vulnerable to such attacks, they estimate.

The big question: what should you do about it? The website *Gearbrain.com* has the following tips:

- If your car seems to be operating with a mind of its own — windows roll up or down, electronics act on their own, or someone else seems to be steering — turn the car off immediately. Call AAA or another service group to have them tow the car back to the dealer, experts say. Do not drive your car to the dealer on your own.
- Keep up to date with firmware upgrades and download when they're needed. Owners of vulnerable vehicles should go to the site

www.driveuconnect.com where they also will find a handy instructional video. Your dealer can do that, too.

- Disable unused services. If you don't use Bluetooth connectivity with your cell phone, deactivate that feature in the vehicle if possible. While it's fun to be able to link your smartphone to your car, hackers can use that gateway as well.
- Learn what features the vehicle uses networking for — and make sure these gateways are secured.
- On-car Wi-Fi hotspots are a potential issue. So if you're going to use one, or install one, make sure you've covered all the details on securing the area with strong passwords.
- All you need is physical access to the on-board diagnostic port to reprogram the car's computer and upload a virus — one that could take control of your car. So only use a trusted mechanic and be very wary of valets.
- Beware of after-market devices like radar detectors or smart driving assist devices. They may not be held to the same standard as those from the original automaker.
- Don't waste time looking for plug and play antivirus products for your car. There just aren't any yet on the consumer side. For now, you'll need to rely on the carmaker for these.

The best products are available to manufacturers to allow them to immunize their code against change and to prevent data being hacked or reconfigured. ❖



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Identity Protection

Nine Ways to Keep Your Home Safe and Secure



YOUR HOME is one of your most valuable possessions, along with everything inside. It is a place you want to feel safe and secure from the potential dangers of the outside world.

Employing and engaging in some basic best practices around home security is the first step to help create a secure environment for your loved ones and family.

Consider these tips to help keep you and your family, and your possessions, safe and secure.

Safe landscaping

As you walk around your property, look for areas that could be potential hiding spots for thieves, who prize the privacy they provide. Try and clear away any overgrown areas.

Talk with your local police department.

Ask your police department to come and inspect your home and property and provide suggestions to increase home security. They can also offer insight on past break-in trends in your area.

Know thy neighbors

Take the time to meet and engage with people on your street and encourage them to watch out for any suspicious activity when you are not home.

Shine a light

Lighting can set the right ambiance inside your home, but outdoor lighting can be the difference between your home being targeted – or not – by thieves. Motion-sensitive fixtures can help add security and provide light when needed. Also consider using automatic timers or a smart lightbulb that can be controlled remotely to turn lights on and off in various parts of the house to help make it seem like you are home.

Don't flaunt your purchases

Thieves look for and steal newly delivered boxes on your front porch, a method called porch pirating, so consider having them delivered elsewhere or requiring a signature for delivery. Thieves may also look at clues provided by your trash or recycling, which may indicate the new computer or flat-screen television inside.

Set a safety routine

Make sure you establish a routine where you regularly lock all doors, shut windows and turn on your alarm system every time you leave your home. Avoid leaving spare keys outside, under a planter or under a welcome mat, as thieves know most of the potential hiding places.

Manage visibility

Make sure you can see who is at your front door without opening it. Avoid placing valuables where they will be visible from the street, and do not place your home alarm panel in a place where people can see you arming it from the outside.

Protect your outdoor valuables

Burglars also target sheds, garages and other outdoor buildings. Secure your grill, lawn mower, bicycles and other outdoor gear.

Make arrangements when you travel

Hold your mail, stop your papers and ask a friend or neighbor to remove flyers from your property. Arrange for snow removal and lawn mowing so you do not advertise when you are away from home. ❖