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Letter to NHTSA: Theft-Prone Hyundai and Kia Vehicles Should Be Recalled

BALTIMORE, MD (April 20, 2023) – Maryland Attorney General Anthony G. Brown, in response to Hyundai and Kia’s continued failure to take adequate steps to address the alarming rate of theft of their vehicles, today joined a coalition of 18 states calling for a federal recall of certain Hyundai and Kia vehicles.

[The letter](#), sent to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), requests NHTSA to institute a recall of unsafe Hyundai and Kia vehicles manufactured between 2011 and 2022 whose easily bypassed ignition switches and lack of engine immobilizers make them particularly vulnerable to theft. Today’s letter calls on the federal government to step in, as the vehicles’ systems are out of compliance with federal standards and pose an unreasonable risk to public safety, and the companies have failed to address these safety issues.

“Car manufacturers failing to adequately address serious public safety concerns is completely unacceptable,” said Attorney General Brown. **“There is a problem with these particular Hyundai and Kia vehicles that puts lives at risk and has even resulted in multiple deaths. These companies must be held responsible for fixing the safety problem without putting the burden to do so on the cars’ owners.”**

Between 2011 and 2022, Hyundai and Kia chose not to include anti-theft devices that were a standard feature in almost every other new car manufactured during that time period, including the same Hyundai and Kia models sold in Canada and Europe. Hyundai and Kia owners now face unnecessary risk of having their vehicles stolen, as well as related concerns, like struggling to obtain insurance for the affected vehicles.

“Even if the vehicle is stolen while the owner is safely away from their car, the disruption to their quality of life is real,” said Attorney General Brown. **“The time lost from work, the money spent to replace their vehicle or fix damages, even the stress of trying to find alternate transportation to get to work, school, appointments, it is all a load these owners should not have to bear, nor endure.”**

Beyond the serious stressors these thefts cause, the threat to public safety is staggering. Theft of these vehicles has frequently been accompanied by reckless driving and further criminal activity, causing injuries and at least eight deaths nationwide. Local law enforcement and first responders have felt the burden as well, and are doing all they can. They've increased patrols and time spent responding to the thefts, distributed anti-theft devices such as steering wheels locks, and been very vocal in alerting the public to this dangerous trend. It has been a losing battle, because social media is inundated with videos illustrating how to hotwire these vehicles and challenging others to steal them.

The coalition asserts that Kia and Hyundai have not gone far enough in their attempts to remedy their vehicles' vulnerability to theft. While the companies have offered a software upgrade, this upgrade will not be available for many affected vehicles until June, and the upgrade can't be installed in some 2011-2022 models. Vehicle owners who cannot receive the software upgrade can reportedly receive a free steering wheel lock from Kia and Hyundai, but this again places additional burdens on owners and does not address the underlying ignition system flaw that makes the vehicles so vulnerable to theft. Many owners have contacted NHTSA for assistance with this theft issue.

In the letter, the states urge NHTSA to take immediate action by instituting a recall of the unsafe Hyundai and Kia vehicles because:

- The vehicles violate federal requirements that vehicles have a starting system that prevents the activation of the engine or motor and steering system when the key is removed;
- The vehicles' vulnerability to hotwiring and theft has created an unreasonable and well-documented risk to safety on U.S. roads;
- Surging thefts of unsafe vehicles have consumed law enforcement and emergency responder resources; and
- The companies' response through a phased and voluntary service campaign is insufficient to protect drivers and the public.

Joining Attorney General Brown in the letter are the Attorneys General of Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, the District of Columbia, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington.

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