



U.S. Department
of Transportation

**National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration**

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OPI: NPO-530

Subject: NHTSA VEHICLE SAFETY HOTLINE

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1. **PURPOSE.** This Order establishes policy for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) Vehicle Safety Hotline and assigns responsibility for its operation.
2. **CANCELLATION.** This Order cancels NHTSA Order 128-1, NHTSA Consumer Auto Safety Hotline, dated August 8, 1983.
3. **BACKGROUND.** The Vehicle Safety Hotline is the primary point of contact for the public to request motor vehicle and traffic safety information or to report safety problems with motor vehicles or motor vehicle equipment (e.g., tires, or child safety seats). These consumer reports are used together with information gathered from other sources to identify and investigate safety defect trends that could pose an unreasonable risk to motor vehicle safety.

The Hotline provides a toll-free telephone number that enables consumers to speak to a representative between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m., Eastern Standard Time, Monday through Friday, or leave a recorded message during non-business hours. The Hotline hours of operation are subject to change based on the agency's needs. The Hotline can also be contacted via email by going to the NHTSA Website at: www.safercar.gov and www.nhtsa.gov.

The Hotline is an outsourced turnkey operation. The contractor is responsible for the agency's call-handling process, including filing vehicle safety complaints on behalf of callers, answering questions, and accepting orders for publications.

4. **POLICY.** It is NHTSA's policy to:
 - a. Acknowledge consumer complaints regarding potential vehicle safety-related defects and provide available information to assist consumers in obtaining appropriate responses to their questions.

- b. Advise the public of ongoing safety defect investigations that may pertain to their vehicles.
 - c. Advise the public of recalls concerning defective vehicles or vehicle equipment resulting from NHTSA's investigative activities or actions initiated by manufacturers.
 - d. Furnish available consumer-oriented information and data concerning the performance of vehicles without giving preference to a particular make, model, or manufacturer.
 - e. Respond to consumer safety-related questions within a reasonable timeframe and forward direct non-safety-related inquiries to the appropriate federal agency.
5. CATEGORIES OF INFORMATION. The Vehicle Safety Hotline function consists of receiving, processing and providing information to respond to public inquiries concerning vehicle safety. The categories listed below describe the type of inquiries the Hotline is prepared to process and how each will be expedited.
- a. Safety Complaints and Electronic Vehicle Owners Questionnaires (EVOQ). These questionnaires report vehicle and vehicle equipment safety defects. The Hotline is required to ask each caller if they would like to file a safety complaint. When generating an EVOQ, Hotline representatives are to give the highest priority to data accuracy and detail.
 - b. Safety-Related Consumer Questions. The Hotline may receive safety-related calls consisting of inquiries about star ratings, vehicle safety technologies, or the safecar.gov website. As print materials are updated, consumers will be provided with the answers to their questions and/or directed to the NHTSA website for answers. If the Hotline is unable to do either of these, they will take the consumer's phone number or e-mail address and provide that information to the COTR who will escalate the inquiry appropriately.
 - c. Non-Safety-Related Complaints, & Consumer Questions. Calls pertaining to non-safety-related defects are referred to other federal agencies. The Federal Trade Commission, for example, provides assistance on matters dealing with automobile warranties and services.
 - d. Recall Information. A primary function of the Hotline is to disseminate information concerning safety recalls. Frequently, this entails specific information on whether a certain make and model of a vehicle (or piece of equipment) is subject to a safety recall.
 - e. Material Request. The Hotline receives requests for agency materials and publications via telephone and/or email. Hotline representatives are to forward requests received to the NHTSA warehouse for fulfillment.

- f. Child Safety Seat Registration. These requests are processed in the same manner as described for material request or the consumer will be directed to the Safercar website where they can register their seat on line.
- g. Program-Related Initiatives. The Hotline will receive calls regarding agency program- related initiatives as they arise. The program area will be responsible for providing information to the Hotline through the COTR so that the Hotline representatives can respond to consumer questions and/or concerns
- h. Email. The Hotline receives email requests that are submitted through the NHTSA Website. The email is automatically forwarded from the Webmaster account at nhtsa.webmaster@dot.gov to the Hotline contractor. All emails received by the Hotline are replied to with an automatic response that acknowledges receipt of the email received. The consumer will also receive a second email that responds to the specific inquiry.
- i. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs). The Hotline responds to general questions using a knowledge management database that allows for all FAQs to be answered consistently among the Hotline representatives. The database includes current agency program and/or initiative information and subject matter expert referrals
- j. Technical Information Request. Requests for technical information are forwarded to the Hotline Contracting Officer's Technical Representative (COTR) and referred to the agency subject matter expert through the COTR for response. In some instances, these questions also require legal review or interpretation before a response is released by the agency.
- k. Tire and Child Safety Seat Recall Registration Notification. The Hotline will respond to general questions regarding the agency's tire and child safety seat automatic notification system. Inquiries that are technical in nature will be escalated through the COTR to the Office of Defects and Investigations (ODI).
- l. New Agency Initiatives and Programs. The Hotline will respond to new agency initiatives and programs as they arise. The Hotline COTR will provide the contractor with the information necessary to support the initiatives.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES.

- a. The Hotline Contractor is responsible for:
 - (1) Providing a turn-key call center operation including:
 - (a) The day-to-day operation and maintenance of the call center;
 - (b) Accessing and responding to the needs of external stakeholders, to include LEP individuals and individuals with disabilities;

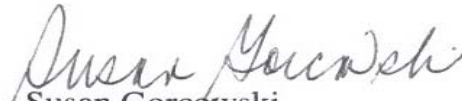
- (c) Providing the facilities, personnel, staff training, hardware, software, and other site equipment and necessities to remain operational; and
 - (d) Maintaining and developing the FAQs knowledge database so that the information provided is current and accurate.
- b. The Office of Communications and Consumer Information (OCCI) is responsible for:
- (1) Conducting a monthly assessment to measure contractor performance and providing constructive feedback. This assessment process includes evaluating product quality and overall performance.
 - (2) Setting the standard for answering calls and talk time. For example, the Hotline contractor should answer calls promptly. Calls should be in the queue no longer than 18 seconds and the average talk time should not exceed two minutes 45 seconds. If entering data for an EVOQ then the average talk time is 15 minutes. However, call times are subject to vary based on the complexity of the call.
 - (3) Determining how to handle calls received during non-business hours are handled. Calls that are left on the Hotline voice recorder should be returned within the next business day after the call was received. The contractor is responsible for maintaining a callback log for each call returned with the date and time of the call and the consumer's name and telephone number.
 - (4) Relaying relevant information to the contractor so that the Hotline staff can be knowledgeable and stay current with agency initiatives and programs.
 - (5) Facilitating an escalation process for unique requests received by the Hotline. These special requests for information are forwarded to the appropriate program and/or subject matter expert.
 - (6) Assessing and responding to the needs of agency stakeholders.
 - (7) Providing the Hotline with information in advance of press events, rulemakings and any other program initiatives that may result in consumer calls to the Hotline.
 - (8) Distributing information to the Hotline concerning unforeseen events that result in Hotline calls.
 - (9) Providing the Hotline with recall information.
 - (10) Working closely with NHTSA's Information Technology (IT) staff to ensure that the contractor's IT systems are operating properly and that the equipment being used conforms to industry standards and meets DOT/government policy.

- (11) Managing the contract budget, which includes reviewing and approving the monthly invoices.
 - (12) Establishing and monitoring the Hotline contract.
 - (13) Ensuring that the Hotline contractor receives relevant information on all major rulemakings, media events and weekly highlights that may generate consumer calls.
- c. The Office of Defects and Investigations (ODI) is responsible for:
- (1) Reviewing and analyzing of consumer EVOQs submitted by the Hotline.
 - (2) Providing the Hotline with connectivity to the Advanced Retrieval, Tire, Equipment, Motor Vehicles, Information System (ARTEMIS) database.
 - (3) Ensuring that the ARTEMIS database is functional and that the information in the database is current and accurate.
 - (4) Providing the Hotline with information regarding high profile safety recalls and/or defect investigations through the Hotline COTR.
 - (5) Approving recall and defect-related FAQs.
 - (6) Providing feedback to the COTR on the accuracy and the quality of the EVOQs being submitted by the Hotline.
- d. The Office of Chief Information Officer is responsible for:
- (1) Conducting the certification and accreditation process to ensure that the contractor meets government standards and/or assisting the contractor in obtaining certification and accreditation.
 - (2) Providing guidance to the contractor through the COTR on all of the IT-related requirements that need to be met under the contract.
 - (3) Providing the Hotline COTR with the necessary employee security agreement information and training.
 - (4) Testing all required IT security controls.
 - (5) Ensuring that the agency Website remains functional and accessible.
 - (6) Working with the contractor through the COTR to ensure that all connectivity matters are addressed and all connectivity issues are resolved.

(7) Ensuring that orderly Configuration Management processes are followed that prevent unanticipated changes in the security configuration of the system, as documented in the Certification & Accreditation process.

e. All NHTSA Program Offices that are Hotline Stakeholders are responsible for:

- (1) Ensuring that all information that pertains to program-related initiatives, which is likely to generate consumer calls, is forwarded to the contractor through the COTR.
- (2) Making sure that their program information on NHTSA's Website is current and accurate.
- (3) Contacting the COTR directly with any questions or concerns regarding the Hotline operation.
- (4) Insuring that subject matter experts return calls to consumers within 48 hours after they receive the referral from the Hotline COTR.
- (5) Making sure that all communication with the Hotline contractor goes through the Hotline COTR Faithia Robertson.


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