



## **Tips for Increasing Recall Completion Rates**

In the last decade, NHTSA oversaw 7,878 safety recalls affecting more than 390 million vehicles and pieces of equipment. With work that affects so many Americans on a regular basis, manufacturers and NHTSA work hard to maximize completion rates for safety recalls.

When it comes to motor vehicle and equipment recalls, there is no “one-size-fits-all” approach for maximizing completion rates. This is because factors like the age of the vehicle or equipment at time of recall, consumer appreciation of relative risk, manufacturer access to current owner contact information, the vehicle or equipment’s price point, a consumer’s relationship and experience with a manufacturer or its dealers and representatives, the ease and convenience of obtaining the free repair, and a myriad of other factors influence whether an individual owner will act to have his or her vehicle or equipment fixed.

NHTSA continues to work with regulated industry to develop and test new strategies, facilitate sharing of lessons learned, and conduct behavioral research. NHTSA will continue to monitor individual recall progress, as well as examine trends, to continuously maintain its awareness of tactics and strategies, and act together with recalling manufacturers to influence improvement of recall completion rates.

As discussed at NHTSA’s recent Retooling Recalls workshop, several tactics and strategies have improved completion rates across the industry. This material helps to aid in that effort. The considerations and tactics outlined below will not necessarily result in the same outcome across industry, since every recall campaign needs to be tailored and a thoughtful approach applied. Rather, this description of various approaches is meant to be illustrative of the various “tools” that have been used to improve completion rates with previous recalls. Nevertheless, every manufacturer should consider this information, with its own experience and lessons learned, in developing a strategy for maximizing recall completion rates.

### ***Common traits of recall campaigns with high completion rates:***

- Direct and plain language about the risk
- Current owner contact information
- An escalation strategy that includes multi-channel and multi-touch approaches
- Emphasis in all recall material that the repairs are FREE
- Conspicuous use of the manufacturer’s brands or logos on recall material
- An approach that is considerate of current owner demographics, what barriers exist to owners obtaining the repair, and a plan that mitigates those barriers
- An execution strategy that best leverages the power, knowledge, and relationships of the manufacturer’s dealer and retailer network

## Reaching Owners

### *Sources for identifying owners and/or vehicles/equipment and using that information to inform engagement strategies*

- Purchaser, repair, and maintenance records of a manufacturer and those of its dealers, distributors, retailers and wholesalers
- State registration and titling records (vehicles and equipment with a VIN)
- Vehicle history reports - provides potential touchpoints who may have records
- Loyalty programs and cards
- License plate recognition programs
- Consumer data sources and providers, including phone and electric company record providers
- Vehicle end-of-life or vehicle transition data providers
- Data visualization software to understand what groups are where and to develop targeted communication pieces

### *Opportunities for improving owner, purchaser, and vehicle/equipment data, and supporting a data-driven segmentation strategy*

- Convenient point- and time-of-sale registration (e.g., retailer opt-ins at checkout, photo texting, QR codes, incentives)
- Robust processes and systems for updating owner information at time of servicing and capturing that information from the service provider (e.g., asking at time of service how owners want to be contacted in the event of a safety recall)
- Regular updating of vehicle registration, titling, and end-of-life data from data sources
- Outbound messaging that assures the owner that data will not be shared or used for anything other than safety recall notices and robust compliance with that assurance
- Demographic data sources that provide or can be used to interpret owner demographics including age, household income, education level, religion, language preference, etc.

### *Effective messaging*

- Clear, concise, and accurate
- Personalized greeting (“Dear Mr. Smith” not “Dear Owner”)
- The word “urgent” or other terms that convey urgency
- Emphasize wherever possible that the remedy is FREE
- Use high-impact graphics specific to the risk and/or the recalled vehicle or equipment (e.g., picture of the vehicle/equipment under recall, or the make, model, and model year of the vehicle under recall, including the color of that owner’s car where possible).
- Prominently display the manufacturer’s logo as well as that of the U.S. DOT and/or NHTSA (the latter are restricted to recalling manufacturers; do NOT encourage use by dealers).
- Prominently display the phone number owners should call to schedule a repair or request a refund.

- Include in every communication instructions for the consumer to report that they no longer own or use the vehicle/equipment and to report, if known, who does own or use it, or to whom it was sold or gifted.
- Do not use generic or low-impact images (e.g., scenic pictures or a computer).
- Do not use disclaimers or other language that mitigates the risk or the urgency (e.g., “no injuries have occurred to date,” or “out of an abundance of caution we are recalling”).
- Do not use technical or scientific jargon.

## **Ways to Communicate**

### ***Utilizing a multi-channel and multi-touch approach***

- A multi-channel approach is a practice by which manufacturers communicate safety recalls via a variety of direct and indirect communication methods.
- Some examples of communication channels manufacturers have used:
  - Mailings using different sizing and mechanisms for delivery - letters, postcards, third-party services (e.g., FedEx, UPS), certified mail, oversized mailers, etc.
  - E-mails
  - Text messaging
  - Trade and enthusiast magazines
  - Non-English language publications and media
  - Sporting and local community events
  - Social media
  - Press conferences
  - Websites and microsites
  - Radio advertisements and PSAs
- A multi-touch approach is one where communications are delivered frequently and through multiple different channels that are integrated into their branding and messaging.
- Multi-touch approaches invoking a quickly timed, one-after-another set of outreaches have proved more effective than outreaches at established intervals (e.g., every few months, semi-annually)
- Motivating language

### ***Social media use and strategies***

- Often most useful as a supplemental strategy
- Repetitive messaging that shares look and feel of other channels’ messaging
- Clear and direct communication of risk
- Call to action with clear next steps
- Add an image of consumer’s vehicle or equipment (including, where possible, the color of the vehicle)

- Have a customer service link or phone number conspicuously displayed, and have adequate staffing to support it.
- Offer ability to “tag” or forward message to others.
- Engage trusted or familiar sources to promote the message (local leader, local dealer or retailer).

### ***Retailer strategies***

- Develop a system that can identify recalled vehicles or equipment from sales histories and notify purchasers at e-mail, billing, and shipping addresses.
- Post posters on front doors (inside and outside facing).
- Post notices and warnings in aisles and areas where the vehicles or equipment are sold.
- Post notices online and on store apps; consider a dedicated and conspicuous space for safety recall notices and/or the area where the purchaser would go to reorder or purchase a similar vehicle or piece of equipment.

### **Completing Repairs**

#### ***Optimizing completion rates through franchised or other third parties (dealer, retailer, distributor, independent repair facility, etc.)***

- Use manufacturer’s network to help carry the recall message and influence repairs.
- Provide manufacturer’s network with owner contact information, material, subsidies, software, and other support needed to maximize marketing about the recall.
- Solicit manufacturer’s network for what approaches they have used to influence and what outreach strategies they use.
- Use motivational tools, such as performance metrics and incentive programs and contests targeted at both management and staff.
- Aggressively monitor parts supply and usage and have a plan to be able to react quickly to disruptions.
- Communicate clearly and frequently information related to parts availability, particularly if parts are constrained.
- Be clear on what services the manufacturer is supporting to reduce owner inconvenience, and any restrictions on those services (e.g., towing or mobile repair for owners a certain minimum distance from a dealership)

#### ***Ideas for reducing owner inconvenience and encouraging proactive consumer action***

- Mobile repair - dealer or third-party executed options
- Repair-a-thons (pop-up repair sites at fairs, sporting events, etc.)
- Towing
- Free rental car
- Courtesy shuttles, taxis, and complimentary ride sharing services
- Incentives

- Be careful with coupons that could be perceived as soliciting for paid services when a recall is actually free.
- Repetitive messages that convey urgency, particularly when conveyed via multiple channels
- A specific call to action with clear instructions on next steps
- Graphic language and images where the risk is particularly profound