

Updated Chronology of Principal Events

On November 3, 2011, Suzuki received a Field Technical Information Report (FTIR) reporting that the “air bag off” telltale lamp in a Kizashi vehicle was illuminated when the front passenger seat was vacant. (The intended design is to have no illumination when the seat is vacant.) Suzuki retrieved the seat cushion for study and provided the OCS mat and bottom seat cushion to the mat supplier. The supplier found no fault in the OCS mat that would explain the symptoms.

Suzuki did not receive any similar reports until 2014, when a report was received involving a Grand Vitara vehicle exhibiting similar symptoms. Again, Suzuki retrieved the seat cushion for study and provided the OCS mat and bottom seat cushion to the mat supplier. As before, the supplier found no fault in the OCS mat that would explain the symptoms. One additional report was received in 2015. In this case, the seat cushion was retrieved for study and sent to the seat supplier, who found no fault in the construction of the seat cushion assembly or performance of the OCS mat.

Suzuki received two additional reports in 2016, and at this point, noted that the leather seat cover appeared shrunken on one of the retrieved seats. Suzuki was able to replicate leather shrinkage when the leather was made wet and then dried at a high temperature, but did not perceive that condition to be likely to occur in a motor vehicle environment.

By late 2017, Suzuki had received a total of 10 FTIRs involving Kizashi and Grand Vitara vehicles, and confirmed that the Occupant Classification System (OCS) was misclassifying a vacant passenger seat as a child occupant, and misclassifying a child occupant sitting directly on the seat (not in a child restraint system) as an adult occupant, most likely as a result of the effect of shrunken leather on the seat cover. However, Suzuki continued to believe that the conditions necessary to result in shrunken leather were not likely to occur in reasonably foreseeable usage conditions.

In an effort to seek the real-world conditions that would result in natural leather shrinkage Suzuki continued its investigation during 2018. It consulted with the leather supplier, analyzed the effects of adhesives on the leather, investigated the effect of UV exposure on the leather, studied the effects of high ambient temperature (up to 194°F), but could not induce shrinkage of the leather. Suzuki also collected sample seats from its spare parts warehouse for investigation, but none of them exhibited the shrinkage.

In Nov. 2018, Suzuki investigated California state environmental conditions where most of the incidents were reported. Suzuki learned that there are large variations in the ambient temperature and humidity in that State. Suzuki confirmed that the natural leather

of the seat cover can shrink in foreseeable usage conditions as replicated by results of the temperature and humidity cycle tests with natural leather test pieces.

In February 2019, Suzuki conducted a series of tests on seats exhibiting the shrunken leather condition, covering the range of FMVSS 208 test conditions, to determine the consequences of the shrunken leather. Suzuki determined that the OCS could misclassify a rear facing child restraint as an adult. On February 28, 2019, Suzuki decided to conduct a safety recall to address this condition. Suzuki has received no reports of injuries or of inappropriate air bag deployment related to this issue.

On November 14, 2019, SMC decided that initiation of the recall for Suzuki Kizashi vehicles would have to be delayed until early April 2020, due to a delay in the production of an adequate supply of countermeasure parts.