

Checking for recalls

Easy · 5 min to do · Free

Enter your 17-character VIN (lower left of the windshield, or on your registration) or your plate at [NHTSA.gov/recalls](https://www.nhtsa.gov/recalls). "0 unrepaired recalls" means you're clear; anything else, call a dealer for your brand. Safety recall repairs are free, by law the manufacturer must fix, replace or refund. Check twice a year and get the free SaferCar app for alerts. If your car has a Do Not Drive warning, like certain Takata air bag vehicles, don't drive it except straight to the dealer.

YOU'LL NEED

- ☐ Your VIN (lower left of the windshield, or on your registration or insurance card) or your license plate number

DO IT LIKE THIS

- 1 Find your VIN on the lower left of the windshield, on your registration card, or possibly on your insurance card.
- 2 Enter it, or your plate number, at [NHTSA.gov/recalls](https://www.nhtsa.gov/recalls). If there's nothing to fix, you'll see "0 unrepaired recalls associated with this VIN".
- 3 If it shows an open recall, read the notice and follow any interim safety advice, then call a dealer for your brand to schedule the free repair.
- 4 Check twice a year, and register your car, tires and car seats. NHTSA's free SaferCar app sends a phone alert when it finds a recall for something you entered.
- 5 Watch your mail. Manufacturers must notify registered owners by first-class mail within 60 days of telling NHTSA about a recall. Keep your address current with the DMV.

Watch out Some recalls are urgent. Do Not Drive warnings have been issued for certain vehicles with Takata air bags, which can explode when they deploy and have caused injuries and deaths. Those vehicles should be repaired immediately. Don't ask a dealer to disable an air bag while you wait: a disabled air bag has a 100% chance of failing to protect you.

DAD NOTE Five minutes with your VIN beats finding out the hard way.

Full lesson: aptkeys.com/your-place/car-ownership/checking-for-recalls/

Checked October 2, 2026. Sources: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration; Federal Trade Commission.