Airbag on/off switches available for all cars

Anyone who drives a car built in 1990 or later has the added responsibility of airbags. This is because a child or smaller adult may be in jeopardy when riding in a car with a live airbag in front of them. Now, however, there is a switch that can turn on and off the airbag system.

Airbag Service ™, (a local Mercer Island business in Washington State), has partnered with NHTSA (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration) to provide information and switch installations for the many cars that carry smaller than average sized passengers. Until now there was only a handful of cars with on/off switches available to consumers. This has been a problem especially for older women who are short and for parents in carpools who must place children in the front seat. Now anyone can have a switch installed in any car.

The process to obtain a switch begins with the vehicle owner completing a US DOT Request Form and sending it to NHTSA. The car owner will then receive a letter giving them permission to have the switch installed. To obtain more information about switches or to receive the appropriate NHTSA forms, you can visit Internet sites www.nhtsa.com or www.Airbagservice.com or call 800-424-9393 (NHTSA).

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AIRBAGS

The U.S. Department of Transportation requires air bags to be installed on every new car that is delivered by a manufacturer. Air bags must not be made inoperable unless it is done in accordance with the rules set down by the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA).

On/off switch permissions are available upon request from NHSTA. Applicants must fall into one of the four groups that are eligible for the installation of such a switch. NHSTA will issue an HS 603 that will allow an on/off switch to be installed to qualified applicants. The applicant must then take the HS 603 to a qualified installer. The installation must be in accordance with DOT specs. Many new car dealers and repair shops are reluctant to install these switches and you may have to look around to find someone who is qualified and will perform the work.

Dealers who are connected to the Internet may log on to : http://www.safercar.gov/ . This site is full of information and can answer most questions regarding air bags that will ever come up, including a list of dealers and/or repair businesses who are willing to install an air bag on/off switch with authorization from NHSTA.

CHECKING AIR BAGS

When air bags have been deployed, it is not always easy to be aware of that fact by just looking. One of the things dealers should always check is the ‘dashboard warning light” for the air bags. This warning light will always work unless the bulb is out, the battery of the car is dead, or someone has cut the wire leading to the warning light.
A computer diagnosis, to determine the condition of the air bag, is also available from franchised dealers and many of the automotive diagnostic companies in a state.

**SEAT BELT LAW CLARIFIED**

Here is a statement each and every dealer should heed. “It is illegal to operate a vehicle on Oregon’s highways if the vehicle does not have operable safety equipment (seat belts) for ALL SEATING POSITIONS of the vehicle. Dealers should not try to avoid liability for seat belts that are inoperative for passengers. That could put your customers in the position of breaking the law. All the seat belts should function properly or the vehicle needs to be towed from the dealership.

Disclosures should state:

- Specifically what safety equipment is missing, defective, faulty or inoperable.
- Who the waiver is being negotiated between (the dealer and the buyer)
- State that the customer is towing the vehicle from the lot
- Signify their understanding the vehicle cannot be legally operated or moved (under it’s own power or with passengers) on any highway
- What was the ‘consideration’ or benefit to the customer in accepting a vehicle that does not belong on the road in its current condition?

**OVDA Dealer Education School NOTICE:** The information on this disc is not legal advice, and is not meant to be legal advice. If you desire legal advice, please see your attorney.