

# BMW recalling 200,000 vehicles



By KEN THOMAS  
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WASHINGTON (AP) — BMW AG said Wednesday it was recalling 200,000 vehicles over concerns that the front passenger air bag may not deploy in a crash.

The German automaker said the recall involves the 2006 3 Series, the 2004-2006 5 Series, and the 2004-2006 X3 compact sport utility vehicles in the United States.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration said in a posting on its Web site that small cracks could develop in a seat detection mat and deactivate the front passenger air bags.

NHTSA said the air bag warning lamp and the passenger air bag "on-off" light would remain on. The head protection system, however, would not be affected, the government said.

BMW spokesman Tom Plucinsky said there were no injuries or accidents reported.

If the seat detection mat fails to sense that a person is sitting in the passenger seat, it deactivates the air bag. Plucinsky said customers alerted the company when they noticed that the air bag light indicated a deactivated air bag even when a passenger sat in the seat.

NHTSA opened an investigation into the issue in September 2007 and upgraded its probe in January. In addition to the vehicles under Wednesday's recall, the ongoing investigation also includes the 2004-2006 Z4, 2006 X5, 2006 6 Series and some 2004-2006 7 Series vehicles.

BMW had received 23,739 warranty claims over the air bag system issue by early January, NHTSA said. Plucinsky could not immediately address why the additional vehicles under NHTSA's investigation were not part of the recall.

To respond to the problem, BMW said it would extend the warranty to 10 years without any mileage limit for the following vehicles: 2006 6 Series, 2006 3 Series with standard seat, 2004-2005 Z4, 2004-2006 7 Series, 2006 X5, and 2004-2006 5 Series with comfort seats.

BMW said under the extended warranty program, the detection mat in a vehicle with the air bag system problems would be replaced at no charge to the customer.

Owners can contact BMW at (800) 525-7417.