

Testimony of David Kelly, Project Director
Independent Testing Coalition
House Energy and Commerce Committee
Commerce, Manufacturing and Trade Subcommittee
June 2, 2015

Thank you for the invitation to appear before the committee to discuss the activities of the Independent Testing Coalition (ITC). The ITC is comprised of the 10 automakers that have Takata airbags in their passenger vehicles - BMW, Chrysler/Fiat, Honda, Ford, GM, Mitsubishi, Mazda, Nissan, Subaru and Toyota. The ITC is committed to an independent and comprehensive investigation of the technical issues associated with Takata airbag inflators and look forward to the results of this process as we focus on the safety, security and peace of mind of all motorists. Our goal is to find the root cause of this problem. ITC members support a scientific, engineering analysis, and will not pre-judge the process or its outcomes. While it is important to identify the root cause of issues with Takata airbag inflators as quickly as possible, it is more important to get the answer right.

The ITC has engaged Orbital ATK to conduct the engineering analysis for this project. OATK is a renowned firm with expertise in propellants and significant experience with rocket launchers and NASA. This review is underway. They are not your traditional industry firm or consultant and do not have a pre-conceived notion as to a final outcome. The staff at Orbital ATK has extensive investigatory experience and is the right team to conduct this investigation.

As we have started looking at this issue of energetic disassembly, it is apparent that there is no silver bullet or easy solution to be found. The public needs to understand that experts have been studying this problem for years. If this was anything but the complex project that it is, a root cause would have been identified by now. Unfortunately, that is not the case and a final determination is not imminent.

We have devised a detailed testing plan that, when completed, will examine every identified aspect of the problem. We will conduct more than 10,000 chemical tests alone. That will be supplemented by a similar number of non-destructive tests and many thousands of advanced computer simulation runs. In addition, there will be a significant amount of data generated from our tests that then must be analyzed. This issue is too important for any stone to be left unturned.

We have had a very open and honest dialogue with both NHTSA and Takata during the past few months. As we get further into this process, it is imperative that we continue that relationship and share data and information. However, I want to stress that we will conduct our investigation in an independent manner. We very much appreciate any input and suggestions from all parties, but rest assured, we will do our own analysis of others data and testing procedures. When we finish our investigation, we will make our findings public.

I would like to conclude by stressing that we should not let the safety benefits of airbags get lost in this discussion. As Administrator Rosekind said recently, airbags save lives. Motorists affected by the recall should continue to drive their cars until they can be fixed and that consumers should get their cars fixed as soon as possible.