



Millions of potentially faulty cars and vans have never been checked, despite safety recalls, ADS reveals

Figures released under the Freedom of Information Act reveal that more than 3.2 million cars and vans weren't rectified after recalls between 2018 and 2023. The total figure of uncorrected vehicles on the roads will be much higher.

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FAILURE to maintain customer relationships means that millions of faulty – or even potentially unsafe - cars and vans are on the road, despite being subject to a safety recall.

Data experts ADS have learned that 3,252,696 cars and light commercial vehicles recalled between 2018 and 2023 were never checked by franchise dealers.

ADS warn that the total number of unchecked vehicles is even higher and will increase until dealers manage their customer contact management more effectively, so that they can tell drivers to have their vehicle checked.

Safety recalls are a common procedure, meaning that 2,128 models - totalling 14.8 million new vehicles - were identified by manufacturers as requiring dealer attention between 2018 and 2023.

Manufacturers normally notify affected customers by post, advising them to contact their local franchise dealer.

Some dealers proactively contact customers, but many wait until a vehicle is brought in for servicing.

With increasingly variable and extended service intervals, particularly for electric vehicles, a dealer may not see a vehicle for two years or more. Or the customer may go elsewhere for servicing and therefore many remain unaware of outstanding safety recalls.

Consumers also may not receive recall notifications due to changes of address, or simply overlook the letters. As a result, if vehicles are serviced elsewhere the franchise dealer loses contact with the customer, who remains unaware of any issue.

The root of the problem is therefore a failure to maintain contact with those original customers who still have the car.

But, as ADS has repeatedly warned, franchise dealers often lose track of customers due to poor database management.

This also means that they lose business unnecessarily – but these missed safety recall figures show that the stakes are potentially higher.

ADS also recently alerted dealers to the risk that missed safety recalls could result in a sudden unmanageable deluge of cars being presented for checks or repairs, due to possible changes to MOT failure rules.

Currently a missed recall is recorded as an ‘advisory’ during MOT. However, some observers suggest that it may become an automatic failure under rule changes now under consideration by the government.

ADS told the industry that dealer workshops could be overwhelmed by demand that they could not meet, if the expected MOT rule change is announced suddenly.

The business cautioned dealers that such a situation would result in millions of inconvenienced and angry drivers, potentially unable to drive their cars - and massive problems for dealer workshops who could not manage sudden demand for time and potentially new parts.

Now the scale of the issue has been confirmed by the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency, who have revealed the following number of outstanding safety recalls for the years requested by ADS.

2018 – 729,876 (of a total 4,117,940 recalls)
2019 – 422,729 (of a total 2,191,143 recalls)
2020 - 467,345 (of a total 2,130,692 recalls)
2021 – 498,381 (of a total 2,856,141 recalls)
2022 - 739,705 (of a total 2,211,061 recalls)
2023 - 394,660 (of a total 1,373,258 recalls)

Jon Sheard, Operations Director of ADS (Auto Data Solutions), said: "Although a total number of more than 3 million outstanding safety recalls is massive, the real figure is almost certainly much higher, taking into account the years before and since the period in question.

"The fact that almost a quarter of safety recalls are never properly dealt with is the biggest wake-up call yet for dealers to begin taking the maintenance of customer databases more seriously.

"Failure to keep track of customers not only lets down the manufacturers who are fulfilling their duty of care by notifying authorities and drivers to potential issues but

also motorists who have a right to know that their vehicle should be professionally checked."

In sounding the alarm on the issue of customer database management ADS has also repeatedly advised dealers that they are missing opportunities for stronger relationships with their customers.

The company provides a 'Recall Alert' service and support for continual database updating for dealers, who benefit from securing customer relationships.

For example, if every customer who missed a safety recall between 2028 and 2023 had gone on to book a service, MOT or another repair, franchise dealers would have netted hundreds of millions of pounds in additional business as well as ensuring their customers' cars were safe.

Jon Sheard said: "If dealers solved this problem it would benefit their customers, their manufacturer partners and themselves, simply by keeping track of customers properly.

"Last year we reported that up to three quarters of customer records, in the typical dealer database that we analyse, contain inaccuracies. This can be solved quite easily by more consistent monitoring of database accuracy than many dealers routinely undertake."

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ABOUT ADS

ADS - Auto Data Solutions - connects motor retail businesses with market and customer data that increases efficiency and boosts revenue. Working with franchised and independent dealers, ADS (Auto Data Solutions), specialises as a 'hub' bringing together significant data sources for customers across the industry. In a fast-moving and fluid market its focus is on helping to prevent dealers from losing track of customers so that they can build stronger and more loyal relationships.

Founded by a team of former senior CAP-HPI managers, ADS partners with all of the leading data and system providers to provide a unique set of services designed to drive growth and profitability for dealers.