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# United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE,  
AND TRANSPORTATION

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6125

WEBSITE: <http://commerce.senate.gov>

June 13, 2018

The Honorable Heidi King  
Deputy Administrator  
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration  
1200 New Jersey Ave., SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Deputy Administrator King:

I write today regarding troubling reports of fires that have occurred in several models of Kia and Hyundai vehicles. This spring, two separate spontaneous fires involving parked Kia vehicles in the Tampa, Florida, area appear to be among the latest in a series of non-collision related fires.<sup>1</sup>

A review by the Center for Auto Safety (CAS) of complaints filed with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reveals a “frighteningly large number of these vehicles manufactured at the same time catching on fire.”<sup>2</sup> CAS found 120 reports of non-collision related fires in certain Kia and Hyundai vehicles and only 22 similar reports regarding comparable vehicles from other automakers.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, according to both news reports and NHTSA complaint filings, there have been at least 23 spontaneous fires in Florida involving Kia and Hyundai vehicles since 2014.

Just last month, an Ocala woman was forced to pull over and flee her 2012 Kia Sorento after it caught fire while she was driving on I-4.<sup>4</sup>

A Melbourne resident explained in a complaint filed with NHTSA that his 2011 Kia Optima with 51,500 miles caught fire while he was driving at night with cruise control activated.<sup>5</sup> The vehicle was “engulfed” in flames and the fire department was called to the scene to extinguish the fire, which destroyed the vehicle. The driver of a 2012 Kia Sorento in Homestead, Florida, experienced a similar incident.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [\*Florida Woman Says Parked Kia Sorento Spontaneously Burst Into Flames\*, WTFS-TV/ABC Action News \(Apr. 4, 2018\); \*Another Tampa Bay Driver Reports Their KIA Went Up in Flames While Parked\*, WTFS-TV/ABC Action News \(Apr. 24, 2018\).](#)

<sup>2</sup> [\*Letter from Jason Levine, Executive Director, Center for Auto Safety, to Deputy Administrator Heidi King, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, at 1 \(June 11, 2017\).\*](#)

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* at 2.

<sup>4</sup> [\*Caught on Camera: Woman Escapes After Kia Catches Fire on I-4\*, WESH 2 News \(May 25, 2018\).](#)

<sup>5</sup> NHTSA Complaint ID 10645013.

<sup>6</sup> NHTSA Complaint ID 10938549.

In addition, a Melbourne Beach, Florida, resident reported that her 2014 Kia Sorento with 21,000 miles caught fire without warning after the vehicle had been parked for five hours.<sup>7</sup> This vehicle was also destroyed by the fire.

Spontaneous fires are serious safety hazards and should not be taken lightly. We have to find out what is causing these fires and what can be done to prevent them. Owners need to know if their vehicles are safe. As a result, NHTSA must quickly identify and adequately address any serious safety issues.

Accordingly, I ask that you please respond to the following requests:

- 1) Has NHTSA initiated a safety defect investigation into these non-collision-related Kia and Hyundai fires? Provide all communications, including e-mails between and among NHTSA officials and staff, regarding this deliberation.
- 2) What action is NHTSA taking to address these spontaneous fires in Kia and Hyundai vehicles?
- 3) Has NHTSA been in contact with Kia and Hyundai regarding these alleged fires in their vehicles? If so, provide all communications, including e-mails, between NHTSA staff and Kia and Hyundai relating to these alleged fires.
- 4) Provide copies of all complaints received in the past five years by NHTSA from any source that relate to alleged fires in Kia and Hyundai vehicles.

Please provide the requested information as soon as possible, but by no later than July 3, 2018. Thank you in advance for your assistance with this matter.

Sincerely,



BILL NELSON  
Ranking Member

cc: The Honorable John Thune, Chairman

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<sup>7</sup> NHTSA Complaint ID 10726832.