

Safety agency steps up BMW 7 Series probe

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U.S. safety regulators have found 16 crashes and five injuries in an eight-month investigation of transmission control problems with BMW 7 Series luxury cars.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration began the probe in August and has now upgraded it to an engineering analysis, which is a step closer to a recall.

The investigation covers nearly 122,000 BMWs from the 2002-08 model years.

The cars have push-button start and electronic transmission controls. In some cases the owners may think the cars are in park

when they actually are in neutral. The safety agency said in documents on its website Monday that the cars can roll away unexpectedly and crash.

BMW is cooperating in the investigation, company spokesman Dave Buchko said.

NHTSA said in the documents that BMW and investigators have received 50 complaints about the problem.

In one case, the driver of a 2002 745Li told NHTSA that the car was parked at a day-care center north of Atlanta when it rolled about 40 yards and crashed into a parking lot embankment March 29, 2010. No one was hurt.

In another complaint, a driver reported that he



BMW

NHTSA'S INQUIRY into BMW transmission control issues covers cars from the 2002-08 model years.

parked his 2006 750 BMW on Feb. 21, 2007, and it was supposed to automatically shift into park when he touched the stop-start button to turn off the car. Instead, after the driver left the car, it rolled backward about 100 feet and crashed into a lamppost, the driver told NHTSA. No one was injured. He did not set

the parking brake.

"The dealer stated they are unable to diagnose the failure," the man told NHTSA.

NHTSA said it upgraded the investigation to an engineering analysis "to further assess the potential safety consequences of the alleged defect."

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